

IS THERE ROOM AT THE TABLE

FOR RETIRED CLERGY?

by

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For the degree of Doctor of Ministry

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ST. MARY SEMINARY AND GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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DEDICATION

To my wife, Joan, who has been my life's companion and continuous encourager

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Abstract

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The focus of my project is to clarify the role that retired clergy-persons play in the life of the church. My concern is that the institutional church uses the retired clergy-persons when convenient with only accidental concern for their feelings of self-worth. How does the church validate the retiree in new and different forms of continuing ministry? Attention will be given to spiritual formation as a lifelong process which begins at baptism and ends at death.

I will use my present position as Regional Elder in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), as an example of post-retirement active ministry. I want to use this study as a contribution to other faith groups and denominations.

Foundational to this project will be research into the history and evolution of ordination, holy orders, and spiritual formation. Interviews will be conducted with clergy retirees, and judicatory ministers who have responsibility for retiree concerns. Research will be conducted so as to ascertain, to what degree retirees found the transition meaningful. What was there that validated their retired life and ministry?

A necessary ingredient will be the use of scripture, early church practices and theological background that centers on the older clergy in the faith community.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this project has been to identify and articulate the journey of retired clergy of mainline denominations, and retired Roman Catholic priests (Senior Priests) . This project uses the lens of spirituality to center many issues surrounding retirement. The major question which was explored has been how do clergypersons adjust to, and define, their life in retirement. This project has focused specifically on spiritual formation as a life long journey. It assumed that spiritual formation encompasses: 1) The call of God to a religious vocation, 2) an exploration of what nurtures the individual, 3) the signs of support by the church, and, 4) the balancing of family obligations in the fulfillment of that call. Now that one has entered the winter stages of spiritual formation, what have been their satisfactions, expectations, aspirations, and isolations? The hypothesis of this project is that most retired clergy are experiencing spiritual well-being and fulfillment in their retirement.

The specific aims of the project included: What issues have made retirement fulfilling? How aware is the church judicatory¹ as to the needs of retired clergy? Are there settings and gatherings where retired clergy feel free to share their unspoken needs? What are the structures and organizational policies that affirm and support retired clergy? And what resources are there that address the needs and concerns of retired clergy?

¹ Refers to the administrative and overseeing level of the organizational church.

The questions that framed the focus of the research were: Is there a common profile of retired clergy within mainline denominations and within the Roman Catholic priesthood? In

what ways have retired clergy provided spiritual leadership to local parishes that “supported” rather than “threatened” the presiding pastor of the parish? What have been the specific resources available that can nourish the spiritual life of retired clergy?

Ministerial Context of the Project

All of the participants in this project were Christian ministers who were retired, or of retirement age (65), who have served congregations in Ohio. The spiritual and theological backgrounds varied in that the participants’ theological education was from a variety of seminary institutions across the United States. Each denomination had its own mix of theological and doctrinal emphases. Nearly all of the protestant clergy were married, and have reared a family. Those priests who participated in this project were not married. The target cohort of priests included those who have retired and reside within the Cleveland Diocese. This project attempts to bring to light the hopes, aspirations, and limitations of those clergy who reside in the locus of this study.

Four years ago I was asked to serve as a Regional Elder⁵ within the structures of my denomination, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The concept of utilizing retired pastors in leadership capacity beyond the local parish context has been a development within the last 12 years. The Regional Elder provides linkage to the denominational body by providing pastoral concern via care and mentoring to all the pastors and ministers within a given geographical area. This role within the church has some similarity to that of Auxiliary Bishop within the Roman Catholic Church. The role has been evolutionary

⁵ See Appendix A for a summery of the role of Regional Elder in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

in its development. The functions performed were mostly pastoral in nature, with a minimum of administrative and conflict management tasks. Included in the pastoral functions of being a Regional Elder have been: participation in church and pastoral anniversaries, ordinations, building dedications, as well as dialogue regarding personal objectives and challenges. In the region of Ohio there are 14 Regional Elders at the present time. The group of elders meets to share concerns and to participate in accountability on a bi-monthly bases. That accountability is to the Regional Minister & President whose role could be compared to the episcopos, or Bishop. Within the Ohio Region, I have provided leadership to ten congregations on the east side of Cuyahoga County extending from the Cuyahoga River to the eastern border of Cuyahoga County. Seven of these congregations are within corporate Cleveland, and the other three are suburban. Within this locus there are 9 ordained ministers, 16 licensed ministers, and 8 retired ministers. The membership of these congregations ranges from 30 to 900 members. Six of these congregations are African-American, two are multicultural, and two are predominately Caucasian.

By interviewing retired clergy who share in both mentoring and leadership roles, it is anticipated that many other and various forms of ministry for the retired clergy would be shaped and developed by this sample group. It has been my hope that these retired ministers find fulfillment, increased spiritual growth, and personal validation in the winter stage of each of their ministries.

Project Management

In the fall of 2009 I completed the initial draft of the prospectus and developed an annotated bibliography as a part of the prospectus. The schedule of the candidacy symposium was completed prior to November 1, 2009. A schedule of three focus groups which included Disciples of Christ retired clergy, an ecumenical group of retired Intentional Interim specialists, and a retreat setting of Disciples of Christ pastors from the whole state of Ohio was scheduled within that year. In January of 2010 the survey questions and format were completed, and distributed to 80 retired ministers. In the winter and spring of 2010 the outline of the theoretical overview and theological grounding of the project was submitted for review. In the summer and fall of 2010 the data from the survey and the focus groups was transcribed and compiled. In that same time period sixteen interviews were completed and transcribed. In the winter and spring of 2011 the writing of the Reflections, and Conclusion of the project was begun. In the spring of 2011 the writing and printing of the project was completed. The date for the colloquium was negotiated with a completion date in April 2011.

Survey items included both qualitative and quantitative variables to explore various domains about retirement (see Appendix A). Both the focus groups and the survey elicited thoughts and feelings regarding personal affirmation, continued recognition of gifts of ministry, and signs and symbols of validation from the institutional church. The study sought to bring to the surface issues surrounding spiritual practices. The survey was composed of 30 items that took approximately 45 minutes to complete.

A further assumption was that the call to ministry, spiritual formation and ordination has been a life-long process.

The study was guided and supplemented by current research regarding aging in the areas of gerontology and the spirituality of aging. It was my concern that the loss-deficit model of aging, which portrays the normative course of later life as a series of losses that result in depression and enhanced senility needs to be addressed and put into twenty first century paradigm. The traditional loss-deficit model is overly generic in its conceptualization of losses and inaccurate in portraying normative aging as developing deficits.⁶

An annotated bibliography is included to provide the reader with further sources to consult in the area of: spirituality and aging, Gerontology and the aging pastor, and life and health issues of retirement.

It has been my assumption that ordained Christian clergy persons who have attained retirement status within their respective judicatory or denomination, have experienced a diminution of personal value and worth within the church as an institution upon retirement status. My assumption has been that far too often the cliché, “out of sight, out of mind” becomes a reality.

⁶ Psychotherapy as Applied Gerontology: A contextual, Cohort-Based Maturity-Specific Challenge Model. Bob. G. Knigh, Generations; Winter/Spring 93, Vol. 17 Issue 1 p61

CHAPTER II

MINISTRY: A LIFE-LONG JOURNEY OF BEING FOR THE LORD

A. INTRODUCTION

What do ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ do with their time, their lives, and their faith as they approach and live out their days as retired persons? This research addresses the needs, aspirations, disappointments, and expectation of men and women of “the cloth” who have reached the retirement stage of their life. Are they wiser? Are they bitter? Are they idle? Are they physically comfortable? Are they mellow and optimistic? Do they attempt to stay informed to new issues, problems, and ways of thinking? This project will attempt to answer or give insight to these questions.

Retirement challenges one in ways they have never experienced. It is an invitation for growth calling one to: transform their beliefs about themselves, reframe their perceptions of what life and faith are all about, invigorate their thinking, refocus their feelings, clarify their decisions, and to pursue purposeful action. If one wishes the full measure of their own giftedness, they need to heed the call of their latent dreams and meet these challenges on all levels of life. The journey change from full-time work to full time retirement will probably take several years of adjustment and re-focusing. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel has given this sage advice: “He who with a sense for the presence knows that older does not mean to lose time but rather to gain time. And he also

knows that in all his deeds the chief task of man is to sanctify time. All it takes to sanctify time is God, a soul, and a moment. And the three are always here.”⁷

In many ways, retirement continues the Spiritual Formation of each clergyperson. However, there seems to be a new orientation of time that these retirees need to adjust and claim, to the pace of their live

B. Changing Paradigms of Retirement

Retirement creates a need for a re-visioning of aging that explores such fundamental questions as: the significance of life; the valuing of both independence and dependence; the nature of time and one’s life story; the acceptance of personal mortality; and the high value one places upon the transition from functioning as a *human-doing* in the life of the church and community, to a *human-being* who must learn new disciplines and activities which enhance self-value and self-worth? The aging clergyperson must discern the value of a contemplative approach to life if they haven’t discovered it previously. Is it possible to harvest authentic shared spiritual experience which enables those engaged in the process of aging to articulate its questions and impossibilities in a way which is liberating, informative and fulfilling?

⁷ Abraham J. Heschel, “The Older Person and the Family in the Perspective of Jewish Tradition,” in Carol LeFevre and Perry LeFevre (editors), *Aging and the Human Spirit: A Reader in Religion and Gerontology*, (Chicago:Exploration Press, 1981). 42

According to Margaret Scarf

In the course of the last century twenty to thirty years have been added to the life-span due primarily to the advancements in medical science and a new appreciation of personal hygiene. If a person had been born in 1900, their average life expectancy would have been fifty years of age. At the present time, average life expectancy hovers around eighty years, and that figure continues to rise. At the present time there are 70,000 persons who have lived 100 years or more. A whole new phase (thirty plus years) has been added to the human life-cycle. A new period of adulthood that never existed before is now the reality. Prior to the beginning of the twentieth century people simply didn't live long. In a very short span of time more years have been added to the life span than were added in the past 5000 years of recorded history.⁸

A new force is silently sweeping our culture; a force that has already started to change the very fabric of how people organize their lives, how well one relates to acquaintances, friends and family, and how one pre-plans their use of money, time, and gifts. This new force on aging dictates a whole new view of retirement. This shift is happening suddenly. It seems to have come out of nowhere, but has now escalated into a cascade of change that is touching every corner of our society. Daniel Perry, President of the Alliance for Aging Research calls this impending graying of America the "silver tsunami." His research documents what is at stake starting in 2011, when the oldest of the Baby Boomer generation turns 65 and is eligible for Medicare. According to the latest estimates:

In 2011 alone, more than 10,000 Baby Boomers a day will turn age 65. That will translate into more than 3.5 million new Seniors by the end of that year. By 2030, when even the youngest Baby Boomer turns age 65 the older population will swell to some 78 million adults, nearly 20 percent of the United States population.⁹

These projections precipitate more questions which include: Is there a dominant and consistent definition of retirement, how are choices made regarding retirement, and what does one do in retirement? These shifts have already begun to make their mark on our

⁸ Maggie Scarf, *The Bonus Years of Adult Life*, Psychology Today, published November 15, 2008. 6

⁹ Alliance for Aging Research, Daniel Perry, President, <http://agingresearch.org/content/article/detail/826>

society, and they will continue to surge forward in an unending unfolding of new challenges, new opportunities, new options and new directions.

An entirely new definition of retirement has surfaced that has never before been seen so clearly by so many. It's a new human potential movement destined to transform every facet of human endeavor, as well as social planning and political policy. This new depiction of the silver tsunami encourages all social institutions to listen as never before. This new paradigm is different in every way from the "old retirement." "The old retirement" often sustained a notion of personal fragmentation, desolation, episodic depression, chronic illness, and aggravated loneliness. The new paradigm generates personal reconstitution, consolation, purposefulness, and creative change. Whereas, the old perception of aging deluded the aging to think that they would find relief from all that caused pain, all that introduced pressure, and all that induced stress. The old retirement was also the place where there were no more accolades, no more promotions. The old paradigm saw the limited life cycle as ending, while the new paradigm sees the fourth stage of living as a new beginning. Aging is a new chapter in the individual's view of life.

This new perception of retirement presents a circular model of an ever-continuous cycle of: exploration, mastery, mentorship, and renewal. The new way of thinking about retirement values: personal fulfillment over relaxation; life meaning over rest; life balance over lopsided leisure; and realizing long-held dreams over simply time-filling activity. This new paradigm promises an expanding rather than a diminishing sphere of personal operation; a deepened interest in life; a heightened sense of one's own authentic self, and a new passion for self discovery not felt since youth.¹⁰

Not all retirees will want, nor have the necessary enthusiasm to pursue the new paradigm of retirement. They often will lapse into a retirement lifestyle of the old

¹⁰ Jan Cullinane and Kathy Fitzgerald, *The New Retirement: The Ultimate Guide*, Emmaus, PA: Rodale, 2006. 23

definition. At first old style retirees will look like they're doing just fine; they may even chide the "new retirees" for "working" so hard, for investigating new interests with such vigor, for stretching themselves toward maximum personal growth, actively deepening their primary relationships, and for failing to follow them in their "old retirement" routines. Their internal light gradually dims, ultimately leaving them dispirited, dissipated, shallow, and disengaged.

On this the beginning of the cohort of baby-boomer retirements in the United States more than 10,000 people retire every day! Two trends are converging to produce this fantastic surge. As noted above people are living longer. The ranks of retirees are surging like a juggernaut. Baby Boomers can expect to live this new lifestyle for thirty or forty years; longer than any other stage or phase of life. This is not a negative force in our society. Instead of worrying about how can society 'take care' of all these people, social planners need to realize that a new shift is occurring in a world where retirees no longer act like the retirees of yesterday, instead they are finding new ways of invigorating society, investing their experience and their wisdom in it, thereby creating added value in it economically, socially, and spiritually.¹¹

The other trend among aging adults today is early retirement. The average first retirement age is around fifty-seven. The old retirement model of stopping work at the age of sixty-five or seventy is diminishing rapidly. In its place is a new fluidity of movement from job to job, from career to career, from interest to interest.

The individual person is the new manager of mature life careers and life planning. Each retiree is free to enter and exit work projects, leisure interests, educational pursuits, travel, and many other endeavors that have been identified as part of the admixture of life-giving activities that constitute one's retirement "dream." The basic requirement of this new paradigm of retirement is that it does require diligent and intentional pre-retirement planning.¹²

Unfortunately like many shifts within the structure of a society not all components move together, nor do they integrate their present policies and operations into the new paradigm. Many of the institutions and disciplines that care for, and plan for the elders in

¹¹ Ibid. 27

¹² Ibid. 31

our culture, see the elderly as victims sitting in God's waiting room awaiting the pale dark horse of death. This image is filled with depression and disintegration. Policy makers (i.e. politicians) often see the elder citizens as non-productive entities which cause a drain upon the society in which they live. Thanks to technological and scientific advances, by 2020 about 17% of the U.S. population will be sixty-five or older. That means there will be 20 million more elders than there are today, according to the U.S. governments Administration on Aging (Pratt. 2001).¹³ This longevity trend could transform American culture profoundly. We may be living longer lives, but Americans are having a more difficult time with aging than ever before. There are many in this cohort of new retirees who feel invisible or worthless rather than respected and wise, unlike the Japanese and Native Americans, where elders are treated with love, respect, and deference. Many elders in our culture become bitter with loneliness. Added to this is the existential state which defines the retired human identity as; "*who* I was", and not "who I am". This new cohort has redefined the last phase of their life as the most productive! Such great personae as: Michelangelo, grandma Moses, Sojourner Truth, Ex-President Jimmy Carter, Mother Theresa, Mahandas Ghandi , and many other senior icons who discovered their greatest productivity in the fourth quarter of their lives. Earlier this year two more names were added to the roster of top national science award winners, mathematician Gu Chaohao and missile scientist Sun Jiadong , octogenarians. Since the national science award was established in 2000, only five of the sixteen winners

¹³ David A. Pratt, *Social Security Answer Book, 2001*, Administration on Aging, Dept. Health and Human Services Law Library.state.mn.us/elder/law.

have been below the age of eighty. The average age of the nine scientists who won the Nobel Prize for physics, chemistry and medicine last year was age sixty-six.¹⁴

In today's world, a rapid rise to fame is the norm. New fashions and new gadgets become obsolete in a few years or even a few months. One of the sustaining features of western culture is planned obsolescence. This is all complicated with the statistical fact that as people live longer they are bombarded daily with the promotion of products that claim to enhance longevity and comfort. The marketing media projects that the fountain of youth is just one laboratory experiment away from being patented and marketed in various targeted communities. As a result, retirees are connecting themselves to the youth culture, and thus live their last quarter of life in different ways.

Helen Oppenheimer,¹⁵ the distinguished Christian ethicist, reflects on the experience of aging and the challenge it presents to Christian followers of Jesus. She emphasizes that the experience of aging is vastly different for different people. Some persons grow old gracefully and are full of wisdom, contented in themselves and a joy to their human environment, with the worst ravages of physical and mental deterioration passing them by. For others, old age is a constant struggle where the sense of loss is overwhelming. This state is caused by individual losses, not only the routine of a job to go to, but also with the loss of the social structures characteristic of most work sites. For many in this cohort of retirees, the aggregate of losses become nearly intolerable. That aggregate is composed of: loss of productive work, loss of a cadre of work buddies, loss of belonging, loss of a life-long mate, loss of agility, loss of driver's license and the gradual loss of various senses. For some persons they can sustain these losses in stride'

¹⁴ Li Xing, China Daily, "The young should learn from these octogenarians." 2010-01-14. 9

¹⁵ Helen Oppenheimer, *The Experience of Aging: A Challenge to Christian Belief*, (Fourth Leveson Lecture, 2005). 11

for other persons, each loss is filled with emotional pain and increased depression.

Their mantra might be the words of the 19th century hymn, “*change and decay in all around I see. O, Thou who changest not, abide with me*”.¹⁶ We are not dealing truthfully with old age if we fail to see both sides of this picture.

For Christians, however, interpreting the disparity between different people’s experience is a challenge. Why the apparent injustice? Why are older people handed out the pleasures and trials of aging in such unequal measure? Helen Oppenhiemer warns against arriving too easily at glib solutions but draws comfort in the end from Christ’s Passion, the assurance that whatever pains life brings to us have already been experienced by God in Christ, who stands beside us in our human struggle.¹⁷

C. Retirement: Beginning A New Journey

Even though later years can burden individuals with serious illness of self or spouse, retirement may be the best chance to know one’s self and how they are shaped by their relationship to God. Ministers can learn to do ministry in new ways and discover new gifts and fresh energy. This energy may be defined as an internal psychic and spiritual energy that emanates deep within the primordial self. This new activism is changing the face of retirement. “Even the terminology has gotten fuzzy,” writes Robert Kruschitz. “Ask people if they are retired, and you may hear, ‘Yes, no, sort of, not really, I don’t know.’”¹⁸

¹⁶ Henry Francis Lyte (1847), *Abide with Me*, The Presbyterian Hymnal, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990. P.543

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 12

¹⁸ Robert B. Kruschitz, *Christian Reflections: What’s Retirement For?* Center for Christian Ethics, 2003, Waco.TX. 73

Retirement is not an ending; it is a new beginning, the start of a new life journey of vastly expanded experiences. Retirement holds up a light so one can see a wider horizon, an unlimited vista, where living can potentially become more interesting, alive, personal, and filled with an array of new meanings. This new light is an extension of the one which shone inside of the individual ever so long, but a luminescence which only a very few persons ever let shine in the main corridors of their life. It is the dream that was planted in the soul long ago, a dream that was only superficially considered as a child, but gradually it dimmed, flickered and finally slipped from the individual's consciousness. The ember of the dream still burns faintly. Retirement can be the time to fan the ember into a flame, and a time to resurrect this long-for-gotten dream, examine it closely, study it, and find expression for it. That spark is with the retirement years just the same way it has been with people all along...only more so. Horatius Bonar (1808-1889) writes in his well known hymn:

*I heard the voice of Jesus say, "Come unto me and rest:
I came to Jesus as I was, so weary, worn, and sad; I found in a
Resting place, and he has made me glad.
I hear the voice of Jesus say, "Be-hold, I freely give
The living water; thirsty one, stoop down, and drink, and live."
I came to Jesus, and I drank of that life giving stream;
My thirst was quenched, my soul revived, and now I live in
him.
I hear the voice of Jesus say, "I am this world's light;
Look unto me, your morn shall rise, and all your day be night."
I looked to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun;
in that light of life and I'll walk till traveling days are done."¹⁹*

¹⁹ Horatius Bonar (1808-1889). I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say, GATHER Comprehensive, (2nd edit.) Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc. 2004. P. 622.

With the lengthening of life expectancy by about thirty years since 1900, the retiree has more time to accomplish his/her goals of life and ministry. The retiree needs to be open to new callings in this period of his/her life. Finally, they can concentrate on *being* at least as much as *doing*. Many pastors in mid-life welcome their identity as striving to be Christ like, which enhances their sense of being. Much of their time was spent on doing: finishing school, getting a job , earning a living, leading the flock in the parish, funding family expenses, trying to secure a sound financial future, and many other laborious and time consuming tasks. Now, as a retired pastor they can cherish relationships with God, family, and friends at all stages of the life cycle. With retirement comes the best chance to go deeper in knowing oneself and how one is shaped through one's relationship with God. The Apostle Paul must have had aging in mind when he said: "Even though our outer nature is wasting away our inner nature is being renewed day by day (I Corinthians 4:16). Spiritual growth is a more worthy goal for Christians in retirement than "staying busy" could ever be. The aging pastor's energies and gifts for ministry will be redirected as he/she allows God to transform all their relationships, and all that is done in faithful obedience to the call of God. They will continue to use their ministry gifts, those acquired along their life journey and those already discovered in different places and in new ways. Retired ministers can develop; different or delayed interests, new gifts, travel, continuing education, and renewed interpersonal contacts, such as getting better acquainted with their children and grandchildren. These ventures may lead to exciting avocations, or even second careers.

Eugene Peterson's translation of Psalm 91, puts it succinctly:

"If you will hold on to me for dear life," says God
 "I'll get you out of any trouble.
 I'll give you the best care
 If you'll only get to know and trust me.
 Call me and I'll answer, be at your side in bad times;
 I'll rescue you, and then throw you a party
 I'll give you a long life,
 Give you a long drink of salvation!"
 Psalm 91:11-12²⁰

D. Spiritual Formation as a Lifelong Process

The focus of this project explores the needs, role, ministry, spiritual journey and institutional validation of clergy of all faiths and denominations who are retired. The approach in this section is to focus on spiritual formation as a life-long journey. As one approaches spiritual formation one becomes aware that he/she is seeking to find benchmarks for holiness. One can assume that holiness is a gift given by God not to be earned, but additionally it is the operative grace of God which results from the surrender of the self to God. Through one's encounter with the Holy One, one sees God's goodness and love. In such persons, God's goodness and love have become the central organizing principle of their personality. This doesn't mean they are "perfect", but they are on the journey to perfection.

In Gail Sheehy's monumental book *New Passages*,²¹ she divides adulthood into three stages: 18-30 is Provisional Adulthood, ages 30-40 is First Adulthood, and ages 45-85 refers to our Second Adulthood. Within this framework she names the following

²⁰ Eugene Peterson, *The Message: The New Testament –Psalms and Proverbs*. Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1995.

²¹ Gail Sheehy, *New Passages: Mapping Your Life Across Time*. New York: Random House, 1995. 1st.ed.

categories: tryout twenties, turbulent thirties, flourishing forties, flaming fifties, serene sixties, sage seventies, uninhibited eighties, nobility of the nineties, and celebratory centenarians. Can similar categories be applied to the spiritual life?

All religious traditions exist to provide a path to salvation and holiness. Because salvation is understood differently in various faith traditions there are undoubtedly different understandings of holiness. The aspiration to holiness is not an aspiration to become an *eikon* or a stained glass window. It is a call to be in touch with the inner depths of one's existence, to be more awake, more fully alive, to be that person God created to receive His *shalom*. This involves giving more time to prayer, contemplation, and reflection. But that is only one domain of the interior life. Some theologians call this, "thin spirituality."²² These are the places where people feel most connected with God's presence. The Christian spiritual life calls one to be more aware of God, also found in daily work, more conscious of relationships, and being more responsive to the daily routines of life. Those acts are the real arenas of holiness. This is the place where the transcendent and the immanent realities of faith intersect.

The aging clergy person will spend much of his/her time imagining what they will do once they have finished all the tasks at hand. Holiness is a matter of waking up to the presence of God in the present moment. This can be viewed as an existential moment of spiritual awareness. Holiness defined here is an orientation and relational process rather than something that is obtained. The intended stance of the Christian disciple is to walk on the path of holiness, rather than acting holy. It means that holiness is a goal; it is expressed over time in the whole journey of life. It is not something that can be

²² Barbara Brown Taylor and Marcus Borg, *Finding the 'Thin Places'*, Abilene TX: Leafwood, 2010. 62

quantitatively tracked. The dynamics of the holy walks of life are illustrated in this anonymous hymn:

Just a closer walk with Thee,
Grant it Jesus, is my plea,
Daily walking close to Thee,
Let it be, dear Lord, let it be.

I am weak, but Thou art strong;
Jesus, keep me from all wrong;
I'll be satisfied as long
As I walk, let me walk close to Thee.

Through this world of toil and snares,
If I falter, Lord, who cares?
Who with me my burden shares?
None but Thee, dear Lord, none but Thee.

When my feeble life is o'er,
Time for me will be no more;
Guide me gently, safely o'er
To Thy kingdom shore, to Thy shore.²³

What is one to expect and anticipate on this spiritual journey through life? One would hope that if one knew the goal of their life, then possibly there might be a map to guide one around the obstacles and pitfalls that one encounters. Centuries of following Jesus “who is the Way, the Truth and the Life” has provided the church some strategies and clues as to how to reach one’s ultimate goal. Our spiritual life develops and grows in a way not unlike our physical, emotional, and intellectual lives. Certain stages are common to all. St. John of the Cross²⁴ suggests that our spiritual life develops in three stages: the beginning or purgative stage, the proficient or illuminative stage, and the

²³ Anonymous Author, “Just A Closer Walk With Thee”, *Chalice Hymnal*, (Cleveland, OH. The Chalice Press, 1995), 557

²⁴ Jose Vincente Rodriguez, Biographical Narrative. *God Speaks in the Night. The Life, Times, and Teaching of St. John of the Cross*, (Washington D.: ICS Publications, 1991), 3

perfect or unitive stage. These stages are analogous to phases in a person's development from child-hood through adult-hood. The onset of rationality, separating infancy from childhood, is analogous to conversion and acceptance of God—a very rational human act. To each stage God offers a 'way' of advancing. The purgative way purifies those who are just setting out on their journey to the Father. The Illuminative way enlightens those who are committed to Christ, so they may better understand and surrender to the Lord. The unitive way enlightens those who are wholly committed to Christ so they may better understand and obey the Lord. It is an act of total submission and surrender of the human will to the will of God. The unitive way leads the devout soul to a mystical union with the Trinity. St. John of the Cross, with great precision and insight helped the church to understand the crucial transitional times in advancing from one stage to the next. The transition times are times of real spiritual crises. St. John called them "Dark Nights"--- Dark Night of the Senses (corresponding to the experience of the Apostles in the Passion), and the Dark Night of the Spirit corresponding to the experience of the apostles after the ascension, and before Pentecost. Christian pastors who have accepted God's invitation to be ordained may have experienced these steps or dark nights on their own spiritual journey.

If one assumes that ordained presbyters of all denominations are at some point of the illuminative stage of spirituality, they can potentially move in the direction of the unitive stage as they live out their faith in their older years. The move toward the unitive stage is not a striving of the soul, but it is an increasing of surrender of the human will and ego to the ultimate will of God.

Pope John Paul II in his message for the 39th World Day of Prayer for Vocations

states:

Yes, the Spirit of the Lord is the principal agent of our spiritual life. He creates our “new heart”, inspires it with the “new law” of love, of pastoral charity. For the development of the “Yes, the Spirit of the Lord is the principal agent of our spiritual life. He creates our “new spirit life it is essential to be aware that the priest (presbyter) will never lack the grace of the Holy Spirit, as a totally gratuitous gift and as a task which he is called to undertake. Awareness of the gift is the foundation and support of the Priest’s (presbyter’s) unflagging trust. The vocation to ordained ministry is essentially a call to holiness in the form which derives from the sacrament of Orders. Holiness is intimacy with God, it is the imitation of Christ, who was poor, chaste and humble; it is unreserved love for souls and a giving of one’s self on their behalf and for their true good; it is love for the Church which is holy and wants us to be holy, because this is the mission that Christ entrusted to us. Jesus calls his Apostles ‘to be his companions’ (Mk. 3:14) in a privileged intimacy. Not only does he share with them the mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven Mt.13, 16-18), but he expects a surpassing faithfulness from them, consonant with the Apostolic ministry to which He calls them....the humility of a servant who becomes the last of all. He asks of them faith in the powers they received....prayer and fasting as effective tools of apostolic life, and unselfishness. From them He expects prudence together with simplicity and moral rectitude and abandonment to Divine Providence.... May Bishops and priests (and all ordained) be, first of all, witnesses to the holiness of the ministry they have received as a gift. With their life and teaching, may they show the joy of following Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and the renewing efficacy of the mystery of His Easter Redemption. May they make visible by their example, in particular to the young generations, the inspiring adventure reserved for those who, in the footsteps of the Divine Master, choose to belong completely to God and offer themselves so that every person may have life and have it to the full (Jn. 10:10)”²⁵

Karl Rahner is credited with stating that, “The Christian of the future will be a mystic or he will not exist at all.”²⁶ Today one is either a mystic or a non-believer. No one can rely any longer on the fact that the culture lived in is presumably Christian. Everyone is surrounded by other Christians who employ the symbols of faith but none of these assumptions are enough to sustain a Christian faith in an age which is as agnostic,

²⁵ John Paul II, Message for the XXXIX World Day for Vocations 2002, http://vatican.va/holy_paul_ii/messages/vocations/document/hf...11/16/2010

²⁶Karl Rahner Quotes, <http://www.quotesup.com>ShowAuthor.aspx?Author=15820>, accessed 3-17-11

pluralistic, secular, seductive, and narcissistic.. This post-Christian culture no longer carries the faith. Thus, to be a believer today is to live in a certain moral loneliness and spiritual wariness. The spiritual pilgrimage to holiness is not sustained by ideologies or social trends but upon an intimate relationship with God, mediated by Jesus Christ, and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

Christian pastors, retired or nearing retirement status, seem to want to look back and review the “call” to ordained ministry, and to evaluate again their relationship with God and to evaluate what they have accomplished so far.

E. Baptism and Ordination as seen from the Reviewing Stand

Over the centuries the church has defined itself as the body of the Christ which proclaims the mighty acts of God, and mediates God’s loving and reconciling work in the world through the Holy Spirit at work in the community of faith.

For one to find meaning in ordination, one must begin where the Christian faith journey begins, at baptism. Within the cohort of retired pastors being addressed in this project there are any number of needs that evolve within the template of baptism and ordination. Each person at baptism is received into the Kingdom of God and the fellowship of the Church as a Child of God. In that reception all followers of Jesus are redeemed by Christ, all sin is washed away, and the indwelling of the Trinity is proclaimed. As a new follower of Jesus, one enters into the waters of baptism which represents the death of Christ. As one arises from the water, he/she is sacramentally resurrected with Christ in His glorious resurrection. The ordination of a person to the Order of Ministry is based upon the Priesthood of all believers. God calls all (meaning

lay and clergy) of his followers to not only affirm Him with their lips, but to enter into a covenant with God. It is to enter Jesus ministry of: loving, liberating, reconciling, healing, worshipping, and serving which defines and shapes all ministries of His church. Within the ministry of the whole people of God there is, and has been since the early church (apostolic age), a representative ministry called by God and set apart by the Church for distinctive functions in God's service to the world. All ordained ministers receive their authority and commission from the risen Christ and the advocating endorsement of the faith community. In the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination no one is ever ordained into a particular denomination or tradition. Those ordained are representative ministers of the church universal (catholic). At all Disciple of Christ ordinations representatives of other Christian denominations are urged to participate in the service of the Word and Table, as well as in the traditional laying on of hands. Jesus did not institute the sacraments by initiating certain religious rituals himself. Instead, he joined himself to the entirety of human experience through his life, death, and resurrection under the constant impact of God's intimate presence. Ordained pastors are called to lead the way in a chaotic world. They can lead the way in an anti-racist, pro-reconciling, life enhancing church which witnesses to the understanding that all disciples of Jesus are created equally in the sight of God. The retired pastor must continue to grow in faithfulness to the Gospel. He/she still holds others accountable to Christ's Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel in the entire world with integrity, faithfulness, and authenticity. .

As a result of the Ritual of Ordination, the ordained (retired included) are placed in a position of a new identity in Christ. He/she is now a special instrument of God given to

the task of preaching, teaching, evangelizing, transforming lives, and administering the sacraments as fellow laborers in Christ's Kingdom of love and justice. As the ordained open their hearts to the Divine Presence they are transformed into the embodiment of as much of Christ's love and compassion. At the point of the ordination liturgy where there is the laying on of hands upon the ordinand gives all of his/her senses, all devotion, and thanksgiving and gratitude to God. We sing:

*Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire, and lighten with celestial fire;
Thou the anointing Spirit art, who dost thy sevenfold gifts impart.*

*Thy blessed unction from above is comfort, life, and fire of love;
Enable with perpetual light the dullness of our blinded sight.*

*Anoint and cheer our soiled face with the abundance of thy grace;
Keep far our foes; give peace at home; Where thou art guide, no ill can come.*

*Praise to thy eternal merit, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.*²⁷

There needs to be openness to the Holy Spirit's authentic call to ministry in all seasons of life and ministry. That openness generates additional questions: What does God require of us in order to be faithful retired servants ordained by God? What does God require of His aging servants in order to live in peace? What does He require of these aging pastors in order to enjoy blessings from Him? God requires everyone to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God (Micah 6:8). This is the way of the life rooted in the sacramental life. That is truly living life more abundantly.

Retired, baptized, sacramentalized, Christic, ordained pastors have a role and mission to be open to what God has in store for them now, and in the days that lie ahead. We are the work of God's hands and not fashioned in our own image. The gift for which we can

²⁷ Words: Attributed to Rhabanus Maurus, circa 800; paraphrased by John Cosin in 1627. *Come, Holy Ghost, our Souls Inspire*, (Veni, creator spiritus), Service Book and Hymnal; Lutheran Church in America, (Minneapolis, MI., Augsburg Publishing House, 1958), 117.

be infinitely grateful is that by the giftedness of God, we are the “imago dei” put here to be God’s workmanship.

F. Issues for the Aging Pastor

Over a life time how well has the institutional church affirmed this God-given status as a new creation in God’s sight? In many cases our older clergy are tired, burned-out, and have very little support at the emotional and spiritual level of existence. When a person makes the transition to the retired status someone needs to ascertain if the policies and protocols of the diocese, region, conference, presbytery, are life giving, or are they tilted in the direction of institutional survival and economic expediency. As baptism is life giving and life sustaining spiritually, it is necessary to question the retired if this is in fact a reality of retirement, or are there institutional changes that effect this cohort that need to be reviewed and in some cases challenged and changed.

In our baptism we were made whole and strong in faith, but in the aging stage of life many pastors are vulnerable and feel fragmented and burned-out. There is a need to review the support networks that exist, or that fail to exist both within the church community as well as in the broader secular community. It is not enough to address and provide change for our own retired pastors, if we are to be a Gospel people, we will also address the needs and changes that are necessary for “all” of God’s children. One of the components of this study is to discover which policies and procedures are life enhancing and fulfilling, and which are life diminishing. Our Lord said, “I have come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10). As we address

the spiritual, social, economic, and physical needs of clergy who are in the cohort of the retired, we are called to be the prophets in our time who raise the questions as to why retired clergy are not realizing the “abundant life” which was the gift given them when they opened their hearts and minds at the time of their baptism, or of the realization and confirmation of their call to life-time ministry upon their ordination. Abundant living is the way of life based on God’s law of love. In the attempt to access the needs and affirmations of our retired brothers and sisters there is the need to ascertain; to what degree are they able to engage in that life which provides spiritual abundance, economic security and a supportive social milieu. The voice of God still speaks in word, in song, and in art. John Haynes Holmes has left us this hymn:

The voice of God is calling to women and to men; the voice once heard in Zion,
 Resounds on earth again: whom shall I send to succor my people in their need?
 Whom shall I send to loosen the bonds of shame and greed?
 Icity street is still, I see my people falling in darkness and despair.
 Whom shall I send to shatter the fetters which they bear?
 We heed, O God, your summons, and answer: Here are we!
 Send us upon your errand; let us your servant be.
 Our strength is dust and ashes, our years a passing hour;
 But you can use our weakness to magnify your power.
 From ease and plenty save us; from pride of place absolve;
 Purge us of low desire; lift us to high resolve;
 Take us, and make us holy, teach us your will and way Speak, and,
 be-hold? We answer; command and we obey.²⁸

G. As We Gather Around the Table

For the followers of Jesus Christ the central reason and belief is that when people come together as a *gathered community* it is at the invitation of Jesus who enjoins each

²⁸ John Haynes Holmes, “The Voice of God is Calling”, *The United Methodist Hymnal*, (Nashville, TN, The United Methodist Publishing House, 1989), 436

person to worship, thank, and adore the God whom Jesus revealed in His life, ministry, death and resurrection. This is celebrated in the liturgy and the rituals of the Word and the Table. Eucharist (Holy Communion) is seen as something more than private communion with our Lord. This meal is what holds us together as a people. Gathered together in worship, we are the communion. In our life together about His table He continues to tell us who we are and how He would shape us. Within God's covenant of love and forgiveness at His table we shall one day find ourselves fully at one with Him and with one another.

The shorthand phrase for my academic project is contained in a question. "Is there room at the Table for the Retired Pastor"? From the Greek language we have the word "eucharistein," which in English is "to give thanks". As we look at the acts of Christian faith through the eyes of retired clergy, one needs to confront one's self each time that they come to celebrate the Eucharist. The worshipper needs to ask, are we coming to meet the Lord with a thankful heart and in a spirit of love? What does "giving thanks" mean to this my brother or sister who has labored long and hard in the ministry of Jesus Christ? For some retirees there is a sense of resignation and accomplishment. For others there is regret and a feeling that they could have: done more, been present more, listened more, and prayed more. As one advances in spiritual formation there is a sense that an individual in retirement can now share his/her faith now as an iconic mentor. As the religious community includes the ageing clergy in parish life, there is a need to ponder how open and how encouraging we are in letting this cohort of individuals become mentors and models for not only the youth, but for the whole people of God. This is another way that the community of faith can affirm and

validate the life, ministry and accomplishments of our “winter” of life priests and ministers.

As a Eucharistic community, an imbedded metaphor is to have a passion for justice. The Divine Lord, who greets us with openness at His table, was also a genuine prophet in His day. Jesus payed dearly by giving His life so that all of His disciples, through all time and eternity, might follow His example of love and justice here in this world.

At its heart, the spiritual journey is about becoming rooted in being. It is about nurturing and living in a relationship with the sacred, with a thankful heart (eucharistein). It is about developing a perspective about life that transcends the purely self-centered. Non-personal consciousness combines with spiritual development to create a channel for the universal love of Christ, which is compassion. Compassion is a prerequisite for meaningful service. It takes a lot of compassion to be with others’ suffering. The human person cannot be reduced to the physical, the biological, or the technological. To be human is to dwell in the dimension of meaning. The challenges are: establishing a sense of self-worth, becoming less dependent upon productivity or role, reaching a deeper acceptance of one’s own life; and coming to terms with the diminishment and losses of aging.

Within each I Am lies the great source of all being
 Light from within, that’s our illumination
 To dwell in silent peace and stillness, that’s our meditation
 To see the passing world with clearness and compassion
 . (Adapted from *The Journey*. Atchley, 1996)²⁹

²⁹ R.C. Atchley, (1996) *The Journey*. A poem-Atchley

H. Some Ways Ministers Can Grow in The Fourth Season of Life

With the vast changes of the paradigm of aging within the American culture it might be more appropriate to classify aging clergy in two categories. There are those who are *full-time retired*, and those who are *part-time retired*. The critical difference in most instances is the degree to which an individual has to slow down in their “doing” because of increasing health problems, and the need for more than occasional need for medical attention. As a clergyperson slows down, the amount of physical activity and energy spent on administrative details decreases, there is now an increased amount of time that one can spend in selective activities and excursions of leisure that were not possible when one had to perform the expectations of the institutional church, and the needs of a parish congregation.

I. NURTURING THE INTERNAL LIFE

Here let us suggest some topics, categories, and activities that will assist an individual to make the adjustment to the issues of aging. These items fall into two categories: 1. there are those areas that would be considered *being* adjustments, and 2. there are those areas that are *doing* types of activities.

In the first stance, let us consider these positions that will enhance, solidify, and contribute to one’s own personal faith journey. There is the need to re-embrace one’s own internal spiritual life. One can tap into the accumulated wisdom that has accrued within the individual’s lifetime as a spiritual person and as seeker on the journey of faith. One can review and share the satisfactions, the challenges, the moments of grace and refreshment that have been such a blessing from God. There is now the time and

opportunity to contemplate and celebrate the anticipatory joy that faith has given you. The aging pastor can review the sense of finality which all persons have to confront. As one operates from a deepened reality of faith in the person of Jesus Christ, there is a heightened and real sense of actualized hope as one deals existentially with death and the hope of resurrection with Christ. Hopefully, one will experience a sense of peace which leaves his/her undaunted by the challenges and changes implicit in the terminality of life. The blunt fact is that peers and family members in this cohort are increasingly dying.

As one focuses upon the “being” of this Christian pilgrimage, there is an appreciation for, and the setting aside of time for reflection and peregrination into the contemplative dimensions of faith. There are: scripture narratives to be read, comprehensive scripture studies to contemplate, the praying of historic and contemporary prayers that take on new and often deeper meanings that one could not appreciate as an active pastor and administrator. One has more freedom to observe and enjoy increased meaning in the ordinary events of life. Times of reflection can be opportunities to review, evaluate, and celebrate the varieties of spiritual experience which the life in ministry has provided. Those reflections can be verbalized and put in written form so as to leave a legacy for those who follow in faith. As one moves along this more focused contemplative path one experiences a more relational experience of the holy. Jesus becomes a guide and friend as He walks with you, here and now. Prayer becomes more of a welcomed presence of the Trinity. One’s conversations and communication comes more from experiences emanating from the heart, and less from head knowledge. There is, and can be a shift from enlightenment to reliance upon the illuminative grace which inner spirituality produces.

J. Areas of Delayed and Postponed Interest

There are so many times in the life of a busy pastor that new ideas and interesting topics are discovered, but there is never the time to pursue those books or footnotes that peak ones interest.

When a pastor turns toward some form of retirement there is potentially more time to pursue any variety of topics through reading and writing in those areas that leads one further along the pathway of new spiritual discoveries. Often new spiritual revelations emerge when one reviews passages in one's journaling or diary writing. Previously the pastor has been so busy "doing" things that he/she could not recognize patterns or recognition of pieces that have been missing in the grand patch-work quilt of our spiritual journey. That recognition can take place not only in literature and writing endeavors, but some pastors find heightened expression through the arts, or the field of music. There is an increased sense that various topics, expressions, ideas, and images are perceived as a gestalt or a blended tapestry. Ideas and images attain their value as gifts of God to the soul. Reading becomes nurture to a growing and sustainable faith. There is much growth if one deliberately explores areas that stretch not only the mind, but that challenges the paradigm of faith that one customarily employs. Often one of the attributes of aging is the relaxing of the necessity of always being right, orthodox, and conventional. For many persons new ideas and processing of those ideas is not such a threat. The spiritual dimension that accrues from relaxing ego necessities is connected to that deepened and comprehensive surrender of our will to the will of God. With age there is a willingness to seek the deeper mysteries of life in a broader definition of mythology, which informs our concepts of what and where is truth.

K. Self Expression as Spirituality

With increased time available to this cohort of pastors there is an opportunity to focus on postponed hobbies. These hobbies or activities become expressions of the soul rather than achievements. Increased skill is more likely attributed to the grace of God as a gift which when utilized can be passed on to friends or family. Woodworking, ceramics, painting, lawn care, and creating art forms, are all ways of sharing the gifts of God, with the people of God. They can be tiresome tasks, rituals of productivity, but they can provide a real sense of engaging in the creativity of God. Aside from being things that a person can do, they can be an affirmation of God's creative presence in the micro as well as the macro dimensions of the universe.

L. Modeling Sustainable Faith When Deteriorating Health Issues Ensur

The biblical God is throughout a God of the future, leading all into the new, regardless of age.

As stated previously, old age is described as a time when being becomes more important than having or doing. An important task in this journey of ministry in old age is finding constructive and comforting ways of dealing with loss. Losses occur throughout our lives, but they often come at a faster pace in the latter years. Older persons have more chronic illnesses and suffer more acute and chronic pain than younger persons. They visit doctors and are hospitalized twice as often, and stay twice as long. Hearing, sight, muscle-tone, the sense of balance, are often on the decline. Perhaps the deepest loss of all is the death of a lifelong friend or spouse. These increased losses are

an assault on our feelings of self-worth. We grieve not only for our losses, but for the ultimate loss of self which is epitomized when dementia or Alzheimer's disease emasculates one's self identity. In *The Summer of Great Grandmother*, Madeleine L'Engle reflects on what the loss of her mother's memory means for both of them. She finds help in affirming her belief in God's memory of her mother. "If God is a God worth believing in," she concludes, "then he is a loving God who will not abandon or forget the smallest atom of creation, including her mother"³⁰. How we deal with the experience of loss is one of the most critical factors in our happiness or unhappiness as we age. Psychiatrist, Carl Jung has said, we cannot live the evening of life in the same manner as the morning.³¹ As individuals we need to rely on spiritual resources to guide us through these transitions. If the self is seen in the context of God's love, mercy, and perceived through the resurrection of Jesus, a sense of peace and joy can emerge in these latter years.

The key to happiness as we age lies in the same lesson Israel learned in their exile in Babylon. We must undergo a conversion or transformation, an experience of losing our song in order to be able to sing it again in a new key. Even though the melodies of our life will not be played again in the same way, we must not close the keyboard and allow it to gather dust. As with Israel, the Spirit of God is the source of our ability to replace what is lost with something new in our lives. But like Israel, we must let go of some aspects of our past as we move to a new level of living. Insisting on the same activities and schedule we've always known will prevent us from finding new ones when our energy level keeps us from repeating the old.

³⁰ Madeleine L'Engle, *The Summer of the Great Grandmother* (New York; Seabury Press, 1979), 71

³¹ Carl Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1933), 109

An icon of that sense of peace and spiritual joy was demonstrated so powerfully in the living pattern and dying strength of Pope John Paul II. He holds the view that the Christian who experiences suffering goes through three basic stages: acceptance, gratitude, and joy. He holds that these stages cannot be learned from a book, but can be learned only by going through actual suffering. At the end of his life, John Paul showed us all the meaning of these words he wrote back in 1984 when he was still healthy: “When this body is gravely ill, totally incapacitated , and the person is almost incapable of living and acting, all the more do interior maturity and spiritual greatness become evident, constituting a teaching lesson to those who are healthy and normal.”³²

M. Doing Ministry as Aging Pastors

Those persons who become pastors of congregations and leaders in the communities where they have served usually become persons who enjoy the sense of accomplishment which is inherent in their nature, their spirituality, and often in their training. They have served and continue to serve in teaching ministries. They are delighted to be asked to teach Bible classes, theology classes, Sunday School classes, catechetical instructors, camp counselors, leaders of interest groups. It is in their DNA to share insights, truth, and emergent ideas with those who will listen. There is a sense of fulfillment in seeing people emerge and grow. For these aging pastors teaching is, and always will be a ministry which they enjoy.

1. There are other pastors who look forward to, and enjoy traveling and sightseeing. There are places of beauty they want to see. There are institutions, feats of architecture, shrines, and places of curiosity which give them a sense of enjoyment as well as spiritual enhancement. For the protestant pastor these ventures of travel often come from the

³² Pope John Paul II, *Salvifici doloris*, 26

delayed wishes of their spouse. The spouse has been waiting all these years for a time to see the world. It should be noted that there is not only the splendor of seeing God's creation, but this can also be an added phase of husband and wife growing together in new ways. Their oneness becomes a new epiphany.

2. There are numerous other pastors who use this new time as an occasion to engage in creative writing so as to share insights and learning with friends, family, and colleagues in ministry. Their engagement with the world of ideas becomes a legacy that they want to leave for other persons in this journey of faith. The years of experience have given these aging pastors a wealth of information that is not only biographical, historical, and reflective, but with some retirees their minds are both creative and futuristic.

3. Some persons of this cohort continue to share their preaching and homiletical skills. They have enjoyed that part of their experience and are eager to be asked to preach whenever they can. Because there is such a shortage of priests within the Roman Catholic Church, there is the necessity to have priests continue to celebrate and preside over mass in various parishes as long as they are able.

4. In the last few decades many Protestant ministers have taken the training and find fulfillment in becoming a trained and certified Interim Minister. These ministries are short term and are framed within a contractual bases, with a congregation going through a ministry transition. The normal contract ranges from twelve to twenty-four months. This ministry is much more than just "filling-in", but there are prescribed goals and a process which each Interim Minister implements. The flexibility of this type of ministry is that the individual can take whatever time-off he/she desires between contracts with congregations. For the church as an institution there is the benefit of having a highly

trained leader in a situation that may be grieving the loss of a pastor, distraught by moral or ethical discretions, or that need to be challenged to frame a new vision of what that congregation's ministry should be in the future. They are then in a better position to define what kind of pastor can provide the leadership for that future vision.

5. Within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination there is a role for retired pastors who continue to have good health to become Regional Elders. This ministerial role has some similarities to the role of Auxiliary Bishop within the Roman Catholic Church. Each Regional Elder has pastoral responsibility for a given number of congregations within a specific geographical area. The role is to be a pastor to the pastor and ministerial staff of each of these congregations. It can involve attending special celebrations and congregational anniversaries, ordinations, and other gatherings of these congregations. Regional Elders are there by appointment by the Regional Minister (episcopas). These appointments are always considered part-time, ranging from twenty to forty hours a month.

6. There are many other ministers who have found fulfillment in counseling. They will either be available for individual counseling or counseling that may be related to a community organization such as Hospice or hospital chaplaincy. It will vary from one institution to another but usually the commitment of time is flexible and adaptable. Other community ministries would include volunteering at civic, community or sectarian events. These events are usually occasional and of short duration.

7. In both Catholic and Protestant churches there are opportunities to align oneself with a particular school where one can tutor students. These positions provide intergenerational dialogue experiences which provide learning and new insights to both

the old and the young. It is also an opportunity to assist young students who perceive themselves as under validated and as losers, with positive affirmations of self-worth. These affirmations are quiet, subtle, and most often unsolicited but they in many instances provide the student with a whole new positive world view. Most pastors gradually learn compassionate listening, which creates space for younger people to express their hopes and fears and often opens the door for mentoring, which is in many ways the social equivalent of being a midwife. The mentor doesn't determine the nature of the new being, just eases the birth.

8. Some retirees are called to, and train for the venture of becoming a Retreat Lecturer, or to put together talks focused on Mission lectures. These ventures can be marketed through religious journals, or can occur from word of mouth of satisfied and challenged past participants. This is a venture that can be tailored to meet the needs of a group of interested people and can be scheduled for the convenience of the lecturer and his/her own availability.. Study and preparation of these lectures can both force one to go deeper in their reading and research, but also provides a needed service to faith seekers within the many congregations.

All of the above are ventures and opportunities to reveal spirituality and faith as ongoing acts of service and support. It sanctifies the time that is now available to an aging pastor. D.H. Lawrence writes of this mystery of the human person in his poem "Shadows":

And if, in the changing phase of man's life
I fall in sickness and in misery
my wrists seem broken and my heart seems dead
and strength is gone, and my life
is only the leavings of a life:

and still, among it all, snatches of lovely oblivion,
and snatches of renewal
odd, wintry flowers upon the withered stem, yet new,
Strange flowers
such as my life has not brought forth before, new
Blossoms of me--³³

³³ D.H. Lawrence, *Last Poems*, ed. Richard Aldington (London: Martin Secker, 1933), 72

Chapter III

PROJECT RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In chapter two this study catches a glimpse of the changing perceptions and self-definitions of retirement both in the general arena as well as the aging cohort of retired ministers within the Christian church. The study frames the relationship of retiring ministers to their own spiritual formation. Spiritual formation at its best is a life-long process which continues to grow and expand their Christian journey.

A. ASSUMPTIONS

The following eight assumptions guided the project and shaped the reflection in the previous chapter.

The author found that in this study of retired clergy that one still maintains their “identity” as minister or priest in retirement. Retirement is defined uniquely by this cohort as a gradual lessening of administration, and full-time work within a church community. However, there is a reclaiming and maintaining of their identity as minister or priest on an individual basis, with set parameters of ministry, duty and practice.

As suggested in the last chapter, retirees in the clergy have more time to “be” ‘in’ and ‘for’ ministries that engage their heart, soul, and spirit.

This study now considers the following research assumptions:

1. Clergy who retire experience fulfillment and satisfaction in their retired status.
2. A major challenge to adjusting to retirement status for clergy is the abrupt transition from leader participant, to observer participant.
3. A challenge to adjusting to retirement is finding self-identity in *being* rather than *doing*.
4. Retirement satisfaction rests on a combination of controllable and uncontrollable factors which vary for each individual.
5. An ordained minister does not cease to be an ordained minister upon retirement.
6. The cessation of pastoral labor is antithetical to the theology of ordination.
7. Sacramental observance and a variety of contemplative exercises are the pillars that ground and sustain a minister in retirement.
8. Is there room at the table among denominations for retired ministers?

B. The Scope of the Project

The scope of this project reviewed studies on aging that were approached from the fields of psychology, aging and medical science, sociology, public policy, psychology, anthropology, population studies, spiritual formation and gerontology. The monographs, periodicals, and research revealed in journals of gerontology. Most of the gerontology studies recognized and included spirituality as an authentic component of human life and daily living.

In the spring of 2009 questions for a self administered survey were developed. As the questions were drafted the following guidelines were established: Because of the broad latitude of ages for retirement, the terminology “retired, or of retirement age” would be used. Retired participants in the project would be lucid and ambulatory. The cohort of subjects for the survey, the focus groups, and the individual interviews would encompass judicatories in north-east Ohio. All participants would be advised of the confidentiality of the responses. All interviews and focus groups would be audio recorded and later transcribed.

In the fall of 2009 it was determined that the methodology would include; a self administered survey, three focus groups, and personal interviews to provide the data needed. A self administered survey (see appendix B) was designed with 16 open ended questions and 13 closed-ended questions which were meant to test the above noted assumptions. Eight of the open ended questions from the survey were used as the bases of the focus groups (see appendix C). Twelve of the open-ended questions from the survey were the questions used in the personal interview format (see appendix D). Such an

arrangement provided a sense of uniformity and cohesion of the qualitative data elicited from each of the three formats.

C. The Question Design of the Survey

The questions for the survey followed the following construct. Questions 1 through 4 are questions of transition which give an opportunity for the responder to reflect and voice his/her appraisal of gains, the pain of losses, and the joy of gains, and new visions of retired life. Questions 5 and 6 focus on the issues of re-orientation of the self. This helps to clarify what the “now” looks like. Question 7 is meant to urge the responder to reflect on what of his life is to be shared with others. It is also meant to bring into consciousness the concept of offering of oneself as a mentor. Questions 8, 9, and 10 are meant to open up any issues that threaten the self. Question 11 provides an opportunity for the respondent to evaluate what reinforces the self. Questions 12 and 13 are meant to have the subject review their years of ministry. What were their gains and losses as far as skills and changes? Questions 14 through 24 address the question, how do you feel about the issues one confronts when they retire. This is a reality check. Questions 25 -28 which are put at the end are deliberately positioned here so as not to intimidate the survey subject. Question 29 is to suggest to the responder that as they diminish in strength and stamina, there are still spiritual values that can be left for the whole Christian community. The final question is an addendum to allow the responder to be a part of this project.

In the fall of 2009 it was determined that the methodology would include; a self administered survey, three focus groups, and personal interviews to provide the data

needed. A self administered survey was designed with 16 open ended questions and 13 closed-ended questions which were meant to test the above noted hypotheses. Eight of the open ended questions from the survey were used as the bases of the focus groups. Thirteen of the open-ended questions from the survey were the questions used in the personal interview format. Such an arrangement provided a sense of uniformity and cohesion of the qualitative data elicited from each of the three formats.

In April of 2009, with the assistance of two colleagues the first focus group of fifteen ordained Disciples of Christ retired ministers was held. This particular group reviewed was a test run of the initial questions. It was determined that the selected questions were on target and would provide the data anticipated. This group of retired pastors continued to meet as a “support group”. They requested that there would be a future occasion for a report of the outcomes of this project.

In January of 2010 a second Focus Group was conducted with a group of six Intentional Interim Ministers, all of whom are retired from the permanent pastorate status. This group represented clergy from: the United Methodist Church, the United Church of Christ, American Baptist Church, and Disciples of Christ. This focus group differed from the first one in that there was a multiplicity of denominational backgrounds, and each person had dealt with the transition to a new form of ministry which utilized their many years of experience. The Interim Pastor (retired) provides the leadership to a congregation that is beginning the search for a new pastor. The Interim Pastor provides a process for the congregation as it faces its own transition.

The third Focus Group was in a Church Camp setting in May of 2010. Sixteen Disciples of Christ clergy assembled for their annual Retired Ministers Retreat. At this event the morning was devoted to the focus-group agenda and the afternoon provided an opportunity for administering the thirty question survey. The additional dynamic of this focus group included the presence of two female pastors, one Asian pastor, and a recent widower. All pastors were acquainted with each other prior to this event. The participation level was energized and provided much valuable data for this project.

Individual interviews were conducted throughout the year 2010 with fifteen individuals, which was composed of: three retired Catholic Bishops, five Senior Priests, two United Methodist Pastors, one Disciple of Christ Church Administrator, one Church of God Seminary Dean, one Lutheran Church in America Pastor, and two retired Disciple of Christ pastors. These interviews were conducted within the environment of the interviewee. Every subject asked participated in the project, and each was very candid and open with their responses. One of the administrative church leaders not only was prepared, but had put together a folder of materials related to clergy retirement.

Within the cohort of Protestant retirees the age range was from 65 to 85, median age 79.5, and 69.2, mean average. Within the Roman Catholic retirees the age range was from 71 to 88, median age of 79.5, and mean age of 78.15. The age range difference between Roman priests and Protestant pastors is attributed to rules for retirement. For the cohort of protestant pastors retirement is suggested at age 65, for priests age 70 retirement is permitted, but it is the decision of the Bishop to grant retirement. The priest retires (or resigns) from an ecclesiastical status even while he continues to function in his priestly

role. He is no longer a pastor, or an agency administrator, or diocesan official, but he is still engaged in the priestly ministry.

I will now proceed to analyze the data from the self administered survey, the three focus groups, and the personal interviews which I used to discover how clergy retirement affects the individual minister or priest.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis and Summery of the Project Outcomes

In total, the responders in these surveys consisted of: 88% of denominations approached, participated. 100% of responders were 65 through 86 years of age,

And, 80% of the targeted constituency participated.

The eight assumptions described earlier in Chapter III evolved from the state of being basic assumptions, to the state of being clearly defined foci. The questions for the survey, focus groups, and personal interviews each reflected in a direct way on some aspect of the basic assumptions.

What changed when you retired? The responses to this first question resulted in varied answers. 80% demonstrated that retirement gave them a new freedom relating to time and responsibility. One minister said, "No more routine, no deadlines, and I get to plan my own schedule." One subject noted that "he was at first lost in free time." "Freedom from administrative responsibilities and institutional pressure" were universal responses from all of the interviews. One minister responded, "I have moved from being the quarterback to being a substitute." Another area that emerged from mainly protestant retirees was the discovery of "more time with the family." Family at home, family at worship, family traveling together were luxuries that had not previously been available. On the downside of the question twelve respondents noted that they had problems adjusting to a lowered income level in retirement. Three respondents noted that "they had not planned well for retirement." Fifteen per cent of the retirees would have to adjust

to moving to a new community. Three of the Senior Priests had been anxious about “living in a new parish setting. “

What aspects of ministry do you miss? There were eighty –five percent of the respondents missed the weekly preparation of a sermon or homily. Encompassed with sermons preparation was the discipline of reading and preparation. One minister quipped that” he now had his own reading list which wasn’t related to a task.” Seventy-three percent remarked that they miss the prestige and position that came with being a parish pastor and community leader. Eighty two percent of the respondents miss being” the primary celebrant of worship and liturgy.” For many retired pastors the occasions to lead worship are limited to being a fill-in for someone’s vacation, or on special parish occasions or anniversaries. Forty-three per cent stated that they miss the collegiality of clergy fellowship in the communities in which they served.

What was the most difficult aspect of the transition from active pastor to retired Pastor? Nearly all, 95% missed working week-ends regularly. Another respondent said, “It was liberating but difficult learning to relax on Saturday.” Two pastors said that” it was an adjustment seeing that parishioners needs being addressed by another pastor.” One minister missed dearly the congregation that ministered to him upon the recent death of his wife. Sixteen percent of the subjects noted it was now difficult to attend national and regional church gatherings because there is no reimbursement for travel when you are retired.

What aspects of retirement were you, or are you looking forward to in retirement? The overwhelming ninety-six percent noted the new found, freedom,

flexibility and no dictated schedule of time. Some mentioned having more time in hobbies. Other pastors looked forward to “quality family time with their spouse, children and grandchildren.” They also noted:

- “I find my responses are much more real and spontaneous.”
- “I need to grow spiritually by attending spiritual retreats and workshops.”
- “There is more time for engaging in contemplative reading and reflection.”
- “Ministry can now be done without the structure”.
- “I enjoy the freedom of not being on call 24/7.”
- “There is now time for broader church ministry.”
- “As a retiree I can explore new passions and interests.”

Three individuals look forward to engaging in Intentional Ministry which can be contracted for less than full time engagement.³⁰ Of those ministers in Focus Group #2, which was composed of pastors serving as interims, there was great enthusiasm for this type of ministry for those who enjoy good health and relish a challenge. Sixty- eight percent of those who chose interim retirement ministry continue on until they are 75 years old, or some longer.

³⁰ Preparation for Intentional Interim Ministry requires nine months of supervised training.

What was your focus or specialty in ministry before you retired? Ninety-five percent noted that their ministry consisted of; preaching, teaching, counseling and liturgy planning as being their specialty. Other noted;” evangelism, leadership training, spiritual formation, teaching study groups, social justice ministries, pastoral care, and hospital visitation.”

What has been the focus of your ministry since you retired? Responses were:

- “I listen to and read sermons of other preachers.”
- “Homebound and nursing-home visits are my expertise.”
- “I have become a youth advocate at Juvenile Court.”
- “I supply pulpits on Sunday where and when needed.”
- “I was elected a local church elder.”
- “I can selectively meet people where they are in their faith journey.”
- “I continue to refine my spiritual skills and practices.”
- “I support my new pastor.”
- “I make and give away prayer shawls and baby blankets in my home parish.”

Only one pastor responded that “there are some pastors who desire to shrink into nothingness in their retired years.”

If you were mentoring a student-pastor or seminarian, what bits of advice would you want to share with him or her? This question elicited much energy and many responses which indicate to the researcher that many retired ministers can function as mentors to high-school youth, as well as sharing with college and seminary students. One pastor encouraged his students to be "diligent in seeking the high ground in academic studies so as to increase one's range of knowledge in more areas than ministry. As a student and beginning pastor it will be important to recognize one's gifts, talents, and graces bestowed by God," One pastor suggested: "Always love your people, they will remember you as their Shepherd Pastor. Another said, "People will remember how you made them feel, long after they have forgotten what you may have said." Parish - oners will also remember you as a "non-anxious' presence" that provided the best possible pastoral care that you were capable of. It was suggested that a pastor should demonstrate in his/her life that "patience is as much a Christian virtue, as love and hope." As a minister you are always to be praying for, and modeling the spirit and love of Christ." In the issues of congregational life, people will want you to study and address the needs of the parish. They will respond in negative ways if you always need to impose your own agenda regarding congregational issues. It was noted that a minister should seek to live a Eucharistic life (always thankful), and that he/she must continue to grow in their prayer life.

The energy demonstrated in responding to the question indicates the wealth of life experience that is available from this cohort of retired pastors. The pastoral skills and range of experience of retirees is a great resource that can enrich the whole church.

What achievements of your ministry go unrecognized? And is there anything that diminishes your dignity and respect as a retired pastor? These two questions were not answered by pastors. The questions evoked minimal or no response.

Respondents either wrote “no”, or left the question blank. This researcher concluded that the training, experience and spiritual discipline that nearly all ordained ministers have attained, provides the bases for retirees to be content upon completing their ministry, and to feel respected as retired persons.

When asked: **“What gives you a sense of validation in your retirement?”** the responses were abundant. This question was included to validate the positive feelings the minister has regarding retirement. One ministers commented; “My validation comes when people seek my advice or call upon me to share experiences and insights that makes me feel valued as a person.” There were six ministers who indicated that being present with their family provides the validation that they need. Two other ministers noted that “when people indicate to them that something they did in ministry really touched them.” They noted that their ministry was affirming when parishioner remarked as to how they had grown spiritually. Others remarked:

- “My sense of call validates what I do now as a retired minister.”
- “My validation comes from knowing that I did the best with the abilities that I had.”
- “Seeing people who serve unselfishly indicates to me that once in awhile the Gospel breaks into people’s lives.”

- “My validation comes from remembering that I am a child of God, and have had the privilege to serve others in Christ’s name.”

: As you reflect upon your preparation for ministry, what topics or courses would have been helpful to you? This researcher was seeking to discover how well the minister had been prepared for the task of pastoral ministry. One pastor shared, “I needed more direction in leading worship and the skills needed to do adequate church administration.” One pastor alluded to congregational conflicts. Another pastor expressed the need for a seminar on how to avoid parish traps and control oriented lay leaders. Two pastors wished the curriculum at the seminary had been broadened. And another said, “I did not feel adequately grounded in basic theology.”

As you look back and review your ministry, what would you do differently? (Why?) One minister said, “I would have sought more advice from more experienced colleagues in ministry.” Eight ministers shared a variety of responses centering on personal growth and responsibility issues indicating that they would have done just as well with less church meetings.” Other retirees said:

- “Life would have been less stressful if I had developed more patience, tolerance, and assertiveness.”
- “Vacillating in my own faith journey was a hindrance to my effectiveness.”
- “I regret that I didn’t spend more time with my wife.”
- “If I would have taken the time to learn more about my congregation’s history, I could have avoided some of the traps that lurked in the closet.”

- “I would have been more effective if I had attended more growth and career development experiences.”
- “There was too much time lapse between college and getting into seminary.”

One pastor said: “It would have enriched my ministry if I would have spent some time in the mission field.” Another said: “I should have taken sabbatical time and study – leave, as I had been advised.” No one indicated that it was a mistake to have spent their whole life in the ordained ministry, even though the church had not always been kind to them.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion of this study can best be tested by testing the data with the previously mentioned assumptions.

Assumption #1: *Clergy who retire experience fulfillment and satisfaction in their retired status.*

Most ministers do find fulfillment and satisfaction in their fourth state of life (retirement). They approach retirement with enthusiasm and generally have very few regrets or misgivings regarding their ministry. Upon reflection it appears that most clergy look forward to the retirement years as a completion of the ministries that they had longed for. God’s call to a lifetime of ministry has enabled God to be present in their lives and the lives of their congregants in unique and surprising ways. Retirees re-

member that God is still calling them to faithful discipleship, in unknown ministries beyond administering and serving a congregation.

Assumption #2: A major challenge to adjusting to retirement status for clergy is the abrupt transition from leader-participant to observer-participant.

It was this researcher's experience that the resulting data confirmed that all retirement changes whether they were well planned, poorly planned, or abruptly forced, necessitated considerable adjustment to the new use of time, responsibility, and daily planning. The data also indicated that the change of role of the minister is not only difficult for him/her, but also for the people in the parish. As some gerontologists have indicated, there is a grieving process which ensues for all who are affected by such change in relationships.

Assumption #3: A challenge to adjusting to retirement, is finding self-identity" in being" rather than "in doing."

There was substantial evidence that those participants were moving toward the stance of faith that identifies a person by who they are in faith, rather than the prevailing view that identifies a person solely by what they do. Who you are is more than a job description. The preponderance of subjects indicated that in retirement they wish to seek more time for "being".

Assumption #4: Satisfaction in Retirement rests on a combination of controllable and uncontrollable factors which vary for each individual.

This claim is more an observation than what can be generated by hard data. However, the variables of denominational identity, age upon retirement, immediate family support, sustainability of the pension plan, housing (or living conditions in retirement), and relocation is a choice he/she can make.

Assumption #5: An ordained minister does not cease to be ordained upon retirement.

None of those interviewed in this study perceived or believed that upon retirement that his/her ordination status was coming to a close. Universally ordination and spiritual formation are life-long.

Assumption #6: The cessation of pastoral labor is antithetical to the theory of ordination.

As reflected in Assumption #5, all interviewees indicated that once they were ordained, *no* one could take that from them.

Assumption #7: Sacramental observance and a variety of contemplative exercises are the pillars that ground and sustain a minister in retirement.

With all of the participants in this study, there was common agreement that spiritual exercises, devotional disciplines, and reliance upon spiritual guides or directors, are practices that ground ones retirement identity with a faith-filled and sustainable future, even as one's body declines physically.

Assumption #8: Is there room at the table among denominations for retired ministers?

While there may be theological and interpretative differences between and among church denominations, there was universal acclaim that ministers who retired should be treated with respect and dignity, not only because they are elders in the community, but because they have made a life-long contribution to the Kingdom of God. As St .Paul has indicated, “I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ...And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to help you determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.” Philippians 1.6, 9-11

CHAPTER V

REFLECTIONS AND INSIGHTS

A. Introduction

The underlying concern of this project has been to find ways of affirming the cohort of retired ministers who have served Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in North-East Ohio. This project provides the information that is necessary to share with ministers who are now approaching the time of their retirement. I benefited greatly as I interviewed and surveyed the many ministers who became contributions to this project. This study has reinforced my faith that Christian ministers make a contribution to the lives of their parishioners and community far beyond anything that they will ever know. Retired ministers are often invisible and unsung heroes that have and continue to make contributions to the people in the pew. In the pages that follow, I wish to reflect upon the contributions that this study has provided, as well as how this study has shaped my view of pastoral theology, and share with the reader insights that have accrued, and point out the limitations that have become apparent through this project.

Contributions

I believe this research contributes to studies of retired clergy in five specific areas. First, this project bases its theological assertion that all Christian ministry begins at baptism. In the case of God's "called-servants", it eventuates in a call to vocation, which after prescribed training and formation produces a candidate for life-long ordination to Christian ministry. Every participant was devout, prayerful, and exhibited the gifts and

graces of a life dedicated to Jesus Christ. A multitude of chapters could be written in this one area of ministerial life.

Second, I believe that the study provides a panoramic view of how retired ministers see the world, as they look at it from the winter stage of life. In particular, it was illuminating to see how they have so much wisdom they can share with younger colleagues.

Third, the exploration of the topic of adjusting to retirement has provided a “voice” for each of the participants. This may have been the only occasion for some participants to feel that they have been listened to, and heard. In that sense, the project has been pastoral and perhaps therapeutic for some, as they were able to reflect on their ministry.

Fourth, my project provides a model to others who would like to investigate the issue of clergy retirement at a deeper level of inquiry. With minor adjustments this study could be utilized by dioceses, or denominational headquarters. It could also be reformulated into a seminar for those who will be considering retirement in the next few years.

Fifth, this study reveals the feelings and reflects the difficult adjustments faced by ordained ministers of all denominations and dioceses. It included parish pastors and church administrators. While the sample was small ($n = 82$); the outcome and focus questions may be helpful for future retired clergy studies.

C. My Convictions for Pastoral Theology

This study has reinforced my conviction that God still extends His call to the ministry and priesthood to those who are retired from ministry. God still needs leaders, thinkers, and pray-ers in His church. It is from the local congregation that leaders come. Therefore, the community of faith must encourage the youth to listen for God's call to vocation, even as they honor and recognize the seasoned ministers who are now called to new adventures in ministries to be fulfilled in retirement. The Holy Spirit is still resident in the hearts and minds of those priests and ministers who have spent their life in self-giving ways and in simple acts of charity.

It is my conviction that Christian ministry is never easy. At the beginning, the middle, and in the end, ministry requires sacrifice and the grace of patience. In every congregation there are "difficult people" who test a pastor on many occasions, and in devious ways. The training and formation does not come easy. The administrative challenges in a parish are arduous. The discipline of producing a weekly faithful and informed homily can be soul wrenching, not only to the hearers of that word, but for the homilist as well. The retired minister has the burden of adjusting to his/her new role which affects not only the immediate family, the former congregation, and the broader community. None of these are easy tasks spiritually, or emotionally.

Lastly, I am further convinced that retired ministers have much life experience to share with the body of Christ. As one shares their own doubts, and fears, along with their triumphs and victories, there is spiritual growth and nurture which occurs that could never be revealed by anyone in any other profession of life.

D. Insights Gained

I discovered that even in the latter years of life it is possible to carry out the rigors of post graduate education. The goal of this project for me is to obtain a Doctor of Ministry degree. The discipline of focused thought and critical thinking were a challenge at this stage of life. When one has served forty-plus years as a pastor, much of your time is devoted to interruptions and diversions, which occur on a daily bases. Very little time in the life of a minister is devoted to critical thinking and focused attention. For this reason, it would be well for retired pastors to re-engage in courses in academia throughout their years of ministry.

I learned to trust the Holy Spirit as my guide and sustainer in ways I had never thought possible. It was a refreshing surprise to trust my faith-guided intuition. That trust was also conveyed in the encouragement of instructors, much younger students, and co-retirees who provided much inspiration to go forward with this project.

One very helpful discovery in my initial search for information and perspectives from the field of social science was the contribution that the field of gerontology provides. In this recent field, one discovers that there are complimentary contributions that psychology, sociology, anthropology, and spirituality make to gerontology. My studies suggest that regardless of the specialization of each discipline, there is an underlying and subtle affirmation of the human as a whole person. In much of the research, I encountered an informed and cohesive contribution that spirituality makes to gerontology relative to the aging process. This inclusion was very helpful in shaping this project.

It was a challenge to participate in the discipline of theology which is solid and foundational, but also ever changing, as we apply it to daily living and parish life. The class work for this project was rigorous, but most informative and rewarding. The combination of courses offered in this cycle of Doctor of Ministry offerings could not have been any better.

This has been an additional ecumenical experience which has been most illuminating. The very fact that priests and protestant ministers trained very differently, with different rules, regulations, disciplines, and life-styles, are drawn together by the unity found in the vocational call of Christ Jesus. In this study the differences receded into insignificance as each person experienced similar pains, fears, victories and growth.

Some suggestions gleaned from the interviews may help those responsible for retirees as they address many of the above experiences.

There needs to be regularly scheduled events for retired ministers in which they can come together, within denominations, and transcending denominational settings, for discussion and dialogue regarding minister retirement issues. Some denominational events include their retired ministers, but for some, there are occasions when the retired minister or priest has been dropped from the mailing list. There are retired ministers who want to carry on dialogue regarding theological insights and issues. I would hope that this study would give impetus and some direction for that dialogue to occur.

If I were to reconstruct this project I would have started much earlier in the three year time frame to include in a more significant way the cooperation of more denominations. In the case of two of the denominations, they were not forthcoming with data which I had requested. I would conjecture that a larger sample of retired ministers could have been included in the mailed survey.

I would suggest that the issues relative to minister's pensions, health care, and policies of retirement age, need further discussion. In this arena, I am aware that there are not only logistical problems, (i.e. actuarial tables based upon diverse cohorts, and diverse capital reserves, just to site a few), but turf interests become prominent when this issue is discussed. Within the Roman Catholic Church in the U.S. each diocese has its own retirement and pension policies that vary according to the predilections of the presiding bishop. Certainly, if these issues get put on the table for discussion, there needs to be the inclusion of retired ministers participating in that discussion.

In the future someone could conduct a similar study based upon retired deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, or commissioned ministers in the protestant churches.

F. Conclusion

This project has strengthened many of the assumptions that retired clergy make adequate adjustments to retirement. With very few exceptions, ministers continue on the journey of being faithful to the apostolic teachings which has been the grounding for their lifelong ministry. Bruce and Catherine Gould Epperly have expressed it succinctly in these words: "Vital and effective ministry that embraces church, home, and world is the result of nurturing and protecting the seeds of vocational inspiration pastors experienced

in the initial springtime call to ministry. A harvest of righteousness is the result of dynamic interplay of personal commitment and congregational and collegial support during times of crises, change, and growth.³¹

³¹ Adapted from *Four Seasons of Ministry: Gathering a Harvest of Righteousness* by Bruce G. and Katherine Gould Epperly, Herndon, VA: Alban Institute, 2008

APPENDIX A



Christian Church in Ohio

A covenant network of congregations in mission:
We are the Body of Christ gifted and called in covenant together as Disciples of Christ
to be centers of transformation on the new mission frontier of our own communities

Regional Elders Staff Meeting

March 8, 2011 10:00 AM

Regional Church Office

Ministry Role of Regional Elders

Role:

- Member of the Pastoral Ministry team in partnership with Regional Pastoral Staff to provide Pastoral care to clergy and congregations within the assigned District
 - Visitation, phone calls
 - Special needs ministry as necessary
- Assisting Pastoral Staff in Crisis ministry for the congregation with as necessary
- Regular Reporting to Regional Pastoral Staff
 - Immediate communication with Pastoral Staff as questions, concerns and celebrations arise within the district.
 - Monthly Written Reports to Regional Pastor & President
- Attendance at Clergy District meetings (as a Regional Representative)
- Accepting Special Assignments as necessary

Covenant of Accountability

- Support from Regional Pastoral Staff
- Included in the Information Network about Ministries
- Committed to the implementation of the Regional Church vision

REGIONAL STAFF ASSIGNMENTS

The Ohio region is divided into districts as outlined on the above map. Each district has a Regional Pastor assigned who provides pastoral leadership in areas of congregational concerns, pastoral concerns, and pulpit committees. There are also Regional Elders who assist the Regional Pastoral staff with this process.

The Regional Pastors Ministry assignments are:

Bill Edwards	Districts 2, 3, 15	bedwards@ccinoh.org
LaTaunya Bynum	Districts 1, 5, 8, 9, 12	lbynum@ccinoh.org
Stephen Bentley	Districts, 4, 6, 7, 10/11, 13/14	sbentley@ccinoh.org
Brenda Webster	Camp Christian	bwebster@ccinoh.org

The Regional Elders District assignments are:

District 1	Luther Redmon	(419) 382-3827	lredmon@bex.net
District 2	Paul Biery Al Kean	(216) 486-4441 (440) 871-2220	pb_shalom@juno.com
District 3	Thomas Kerns Verlin Barnett	(330) 659-4409 (330) 644-2709	tomkerns@roadrunner.com kimlinb@aol.com
District 4	Bernard Oakes	(330) 652-6577	BOM486@aol.com
District 5	(Vacant)		
District 6	Harold Hopkins	(419) 525-0040	
District 7	Jim Schimmel	(330) 372-3142	JDSchimmel@aol.com
District 8	J. Thomas Johnson Dixie French	(937) 277-6050 (937) 434-8262	jtjohnsonsc1@woh.rr.com dixiefrench4729@gmail.com
District 9	Ken Coy	(614) 210-0240	kjcoy@wowway.com
District 10	Ken Coy	(614) 210-0240	kjcoy@wowway.com
District 11	(Vacant)		
District 12	Pete Smith Larry Pigg	(513) 697-7557 (513) 522-9167	PeteKarenSmith@aol.com
District 13/14	Larry Miracle	(614) 449-3032	mir88@aol.com
District 15	Ed Weisheimer	(216) 283-0143	edannweisheimer@roadrunner.com

APPENDIX B

October 20, 2009

Dear Colleague in Ministry,

"Ours is a generation that is redefining aging," says John "The Penguin" Bingham. "We don't know what old is anymore." Is it a number on the calendar, is it a right-of-passage, is it a market for the medical/pharmaceutical industry, or is it a state of life when our spirituality takes on a new depth?

My concern is that far too seldom retired artisans of the craft of ministry are not called upon for the experience and expertise which is a gift to the larger church.

The objective of the enclosed survey and eventual study is to describe the satisfaction with life issues of Christian pastors who are retired and reside in Ohio.

The survey will be a foundational part of my concentrated study in pursuit of a Doctor of Ministry degree at St. Mary Seminary and Graduate School of Theology in Wicliffe, OH. When I have completed the summery of findings of this study, I will be pleased to share the results with you.

I am calling upon you to share with me what retired Christian pastors think and feel regarding their place in the church, in the community, and in their families. You can help in that endeavor if you will be so kind as to complete the attached survey form. The survey form is self explanatory. There are no trick or loaded questions. All respondents will be anonymous.

Thank you so much for this sharing of your life, your faith, and your curiosity regarding the thoughts and feelings of a select group of retired clergy.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Paul L. Biery
Regional Elder, Christian Church in Ohio

IS THERE ROOM AT THE TABLE?

The insights and wisdom of pastors and religious workers is to be valued and affirmed. In this survey we are seeking insights and concerns from pastors and workers who are retired, or are of retirement age. This survey is confidential and completely voluntary. Please make your responses as brief yet descriptive as possible.

We thank you in advance for your participation in this survey.

1. What changed when you retired?

2. What aspects of ministry do you miss?

3. What was the most difficult aspect of the transition from active pastor to retired pastor?

4. What aspects of retirement were you, or are you looking forward to in retirement?

5. What was your focus or specialty in ministry before you retired?

6. What has been the focus of your ministry since you retired?

7. If you were mentoring a student pastor, or seminarian, what bits of advice would you want to share with him or her?

--

8. What was the most challenging task of your ministry?

--

9. What achievements of your ministry go unrecognized?

--

10. Is there anything that diminishes your dignity and respect as a retired pastor?

--

11. What gives you a sense of validation in your retirement?

--

12. As you reflect upon your early preparation for ministry, what topics or courses would have been helpful to you?

13. As you look back and review your ministry what would you do differently? Why?

14. How concerned have you been up to this point in your life about aging or getting older?

- ☐ Very concerned
- ☐ Somewhat concerned
- ☐ Less concerned
- ☐ Not at all concerned
- ☐ Don't know/ no answer

15. Are there policies or regulations that affect retired clergy that need to be addressed by:

- A. The local congregation: ☐ No change, ☐ Some change, ☐ Much change
- B. Denomination: ☐ No change, ☐ Some change, ☐ Much change
- C. Diocese or Judicatory: ☐ No change, ☐ Some change, ☐ Much change

Comments:

16. Retirement income and living expenses are:

- ☐ More adequate than I had expected
- ☐ Adequate but reasonably comfortable
- ☐ Less than adequate
- ☐ A real struggle

17. In preparation for retirement my financial planning was:

- ☐ Planned with intentionality
- ☐ Planned reasonably well
- ☐ Planned poorly
- ☐ I neglected to have a financial plan

18. What functions of ministry continue to give you fulfillment as a retired pastor:

(1 = most satisfaction, 2 = next most satisfaction, 3 = next most satisfaction)

- ☐ Occasional preaching
- ☐ Intentional Interim Pastoring & preaching
- ☐ Teaching
- ☐ Leading Retreats
- ☐ Counseling
- ☐ Mentoring and Spiritual Directing
- ☐ None of the above

19. What best describes the style of ministry you engaged in:

(You may choose up to three styles)

- ☐ Collaborative
- ☐ Individualistic
- ☐ Person Centered
- ☐ Program Centered
- ☐ Authoritarian
- ☐ Mentoring and Spiritual Directing
- ☐ Other _____

20. Your health status:

- ☐ Relatively healthy for my age
- ☐ Dealing with minor health concerns
- ☐ Have chronic or disabling health concerns
- ☐ Continue to deal with life threatening health concerns

21. Have you found that retirement has enabled you to deepen your spiritual life?

(In what ways has it?)

28 Over my lifetime I have provided leadership in ministry in the following ways:
(Check all that apply)

- ☐ Local or Senior Pastor
- ☐ Youth Pastor
- ☐ Counseling Pastor
- ☐ College or Seminary Instructor
- ☐ Judicatory Administration (episcopas)
- ☐ Chaplain, Institutional or Military

* Of the above, which was the most fulfilling?

Why?

29. Now that you are retired, or contemplating retirement, what would you like to achieve as a legacy for the Christian community?

30. Now that you have completed this survey, are there further questions that you would like included, if you were designing a survey?

Thanks again for your participation.
Rev. Paul L. Biery, Regional Elder
Christian Church in Ohio

APPENDIX C**IS THERE ROOM AT THE TABLE FOR THE RETIRED PASTOR?****Questions for Personal Interviews**

1. What changed for you personally when you retired as Pastor, or Church Official?
2. Are there any functions of ministry that you miss?
3. What aspects of retirement were you, or are you looking forward to in your retirement?
4. As a called servant of God how has the light of the Gospel enhanced your ministry?
5. Can you describe your call to the vocation of ministry? Over the years how have you revisited that "Call"?
6. What contributions of your ministry will have the most lasting affect?
7. Were there initiatives that you proposed that have gone unnoticed or unrecognized?
8. Are there times when you feel isolated or neglected by colleagues in ministry?
9. How would you describe your style of leadership?
10. What components of your spiritual life's journey that keeps you growing in faith?
11. Jesus talked about the "abundant life", how has that shaped your active retirement?
12. What gives you a sense of validation, as God's servant, in your retirement?
13. Is there anything you would still like to accomplish which would be a part of the legacy which you already have established?

APPENDIX D**IS THERE ROOM AT THE TABLE FOR THE RETIRED CLERGY?**

A Focus Group of Interim Trained Clergy

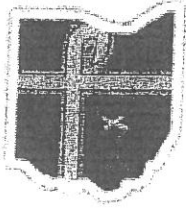
At Lakewood Congregational Church

1. What aspects of retirement are you enjoying, or looking forward to in retirement?
2. What was the most challenging task of your ministry?
3. What achievements of your ministry go unrecognized?
4. What give you a sense of validation in your ministry?
5. Are there policies or regulations that affect retired clergy that need to be addressed? By whom?
6. What functions of ministry give you the most fulfillment?
7. Assuming that spiritual formation is a life long process, what enriches and grows forward your spiritual life?
8. How long until you begin your retirement status? Or How long have you been retired?

Facilitated by: Rev. Paul Biery

January 27, 2010

APPENDIX E



Christian Church in Ohio

DISCIPLES OF CHRIST

*A covenant network of congregations in mission:
We are the Body of Christ gifted and called in covenant together as Disciples of Christ
to be centers of transformation on the new mission frontier of our own communities*

Retired Clergy Retreat

Spouses of Retired Clergy are, as always, welcome to come to this event.

May 20, 2010 ~ 9:30am – 3:30pm

Camp Christian, 10299 Maple Dell Rd, Marysville, Ohio 43040

Is there room at the Table for Retired Clergy?

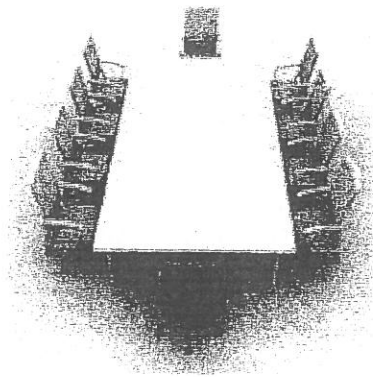
Registration fee - \$10.00 per person

Registration includes the program and lunch.

Need somewhere to stay the night before?

Come to Camp Wednesday night!!

Lodging and Breakfast - \$25.00 per person



The annual Retired Clergy Retreat is scheduled for May 20, 2010. The retreat will be from 9:30am to 3:30pm and will be held at beautiful Camp Christian. The theme for this year's event is "*Is there room at the Table for Retired Clergy?*" In this third phase of life we can discover new forms of identity as we continue to use the gifts we have been using or as we discover new gifts. The leader for the retreat will be Rev. Paul Biery. Paul is a Regional Elder for District 2-E. He and his wife Joan reside in Euclid, Ohio. Ordained in 1966 Paul served pastorates in Ohio with thirty nine of those years in the Cleveland area. Throughout his ministry Paul has demonstrated a passion for civil and human rights, anti-racism programs, peace and justice issues and the building of bridges for ecumenical and inner-faith understanding and dialogue. He has been adjunct professor in various theological schools and is presently pursuing studies and research towards a Doctor of Ministry degree from St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland, Ohio.

Register online at www.ccinoh.org or to register via mail, please fill out the information below and return with payment to CCIO, 355 East Campus View Blvd, Suite 110, Columbus, Ohio 43235

Retired Clergy Retreat

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Please Circle: Home or Cell

Address: _____

Church: _____ Email: _____

Food/Other Concerns _____

_____ I will be staying Wednesday (May 19) night at Camp Christian (be sure to bring your own bedding)

RETIRED CLERGY RETREAT IN MAY AT CAMP CHRISTIAN

MAY 20, 2010

REGISTRATION FEE INCLUDING LUNCH – \$10.00

SCHEDULE

Gathering: 9:30 to 10:00 Sign In and Coffee Time.

(Carol Oetzel and Frances and Don Mertz)

10:00 to 10:30 – Worship – **Don Mertz**

10:30 to 11:45 – *“Is there room at the Table for Retired Clergy?”*

*“In this third phase of life we can discover new forms of
identity as we continue to use the gifts we have been using
or as we discover new gifts.”*

Leader: Paul Biery will help us reflect upon our “call to ministry
and ordination.

12:00 – **Lunch**

1:15 – Reconvene with **Paul Biery** who will help us focus upon
varieties of life-long and life-fulfilling forms of spirituality.

2:00 – **Break**

2:15 to 3:00 – **Paul Biery** ties it all together.

3:00 to 3:15 – Business meeting

3:15 to 3:30 – Closing Communion – **Bill Spangler**

RETREAT LEADER, **PAUL BIERY**, is a Regional Elder for District 2-E. He and his wife Joan reside in Euclid, Ohio. Ordained in 1966 Paul served pastorates in Ohio with thirty nine of those years in the Cleveland area. Throughout his ministry Paul has demonstrated a passion for civil and human rights, anti-racism programs, peace and justice issues and the building of bridges for ecumenical and inner-faith understanding and dialogue. He has been adjunct professor in various theological schools and is presently pursuing studies and research towards a Doctor of Ministry degree from St. Mary Seminary in Cleveland, Ohio.

(Retired Clergy Committee Members: Bill Spangler, Bob Thornton, Carol Oetzel, Diana Morris and Don Mertz.)

APPENDIX F

A service of Blessing to mark Retirement**¶ Introduction**

The ending of a particular ministry through retirement is an important transition both for the minister facing retirement and for the communities which he or she has served. At its heart is the laying down of 'office' for the individual involved. This frequently means a loss of role, position and status. On the other hand it can also mean a liberation into a new or different form of ministry. For the community the transition prepares for and anticipates the continuity of its life with a different minister or a different arrangement for ministry.

These resources are offered to mark the transition to retirement in the context of worship. Balancing the elements of thanksgiving, leave-taking and farewell will be the task of the community and minister involved, as will be the decision as to whether or not a penitential rite is appropriate. It is assumed in the outline below that the President of the liturgy is *not* the departing minister.

The resources could also be used in the context of a service of Holy Communion presided over by a departing priest or by another. In this case it would be helpful if another minister were present to represent the continuity of ministry in the church, and to conduct the Sending Out, especially if the service includes the laying down of symbols of office.

¶ Preparation

These opening verses may be sung by a choir, or by a cantor and congregation, or said as a dialogue between president and congregation, or by a solo voice, or the entire section may be replaced by a hymn.

During the following psalm verses, those who are about to retire may place on the table a symbol of continuing ministry, for example, a Bible, a stole or a Reader's scarf.

I will bless the Lord at all times; ♦
his praise shall ever be in my mouth.

My soul shall glory in the Lord; ♦
let the humble hear and be glad.

O magnify the Lord with me; ♦
let us exalt his name together.

Look upon him and be radiant ♦
and your faces shall not be ashamed.

Psalm 34.1-3, 5

¶ The Gathering

Greeting and Welcome

The Lord be with you
and also with you.

The president welcomes the congregation and those about to retire and outlines the intentions of the service:

- to give thanks to God for a particular ministry
- to remember all that has been achieved and to express sorrow for any failures
- to pray for those who are now moving on into retirement
- to pray for those who remain and for their future

The Collect

The president introduces a period of silent prayer with the words 'Let us pray' or a more specific bidding.

Go before us, Lord, in all our doings
with your most gracious favour,
and further us with your continual help;
that in all our works,
begun, continued and ended in you,
we may glorify your holy name
and finally by your mercy
obtain everlasting life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

or

O God of comfort and hope
whose presence is ever reliable
and ever unexpected:
grant us to let go what is ending,
to welcome what is beginning
and always to listen to your voice
through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

¶ The Word of God

Readings

Either one or two readings from Scripture precede the Gospel reading.

Suggested readings.

From the Old Testament:

Isaiah 40.28-31

Isaiah 43.1-7, 10-12

Proverbs 8.1,21-31

Ecclesiastes 3.1-8

Ecclesiastes 3.10-15

From the New Testament:

Romans 8. 31-39

2 Corinthians 3.17-18

Philippians 4.4-9

Colossians 1.9-14

Hebrews 13.7-8, 14-18

Hebrews 4.4,9-10

A hymn, anthem or the following or another psalm may be sung either between the readings, if there is more than one, or after the second reading.

Psalm 121

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

- 1 I lift up my eyes to the hills; ♦
from where is my help to come?
- 2 My help comes from the Lord, ♦
the maker of heaven and earth.
- 3 He will not suffer your foot to stumble; ♦
he who watches over you will not sleep.
- 4 Behold, he who keeps watch over Israel ♦
shall neither slumber nor sleep. **R**
- 5 The Lord himself watches over you; ♦
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,

- 6 So that the sun shall not strike you by day, ♦
 neither the moon by night.
- 7 The Lord shall keep you from all evil; ♦
 it is he who shall keep your soul.
- 8 The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
 and your coming in, ♦
 from this time forth for evermore.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
 and to the Holy Spirit;
 as it was in the beginning is now
 and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Refrain: The Lord shall keep you from all evil.

Gospel Reading

If this material, is used within a service of Holy Communion, the Gospel Reading follows here.

At a Service of the Word, one of these Gospel readings may be used as a second reading.

Mark 1:14-20
 Mark 10:28-31
 Matthew 5:13-18
 Matthew 6:25-34
 Matthew 11:15-30
 Matthew 13:44-52
 Luke 6:46-49
 Luke 11:9-13
 John 15:1-5, 8-11; 12-17

Sermon

Creed

The Apostles Creed may be said to reaffirm shared baptismal faith or, at a service of Holy Communion, the Nicene Creed may be said.

¶ The Prayers

Prayers of Thankfulness

This prayer may follow as a dialogue between the minister(s) about to retire and the congregation.

Minister	I give thanks to God for his faithfulness; for all the blessings I have received as his minister, for the joy of serving his people, for all lessons learnt, for hopes fulfilled, and for all that has been accomplished through his grace.
Congregation	We give thanks to God for his faithfulness; for all the blessings we have received through your ministry, for the joy of serving with you in the ministry we share, for lessons learnt, for hopes fulfilled, and for all that has been accomplished through his grace.

If prayers of penitence are appropriate they follow here:

Prayers of Penitence

Congregation	When we have failed to receive God's word, when we have expected to be loved without loving, when we have forgotten to pray, When our faith has been in ourselves alone, Good Lord, forgive us.
Minister	When I have failed to listen to God's word, When my love has been cold, When my prayers have been few, When my faith has run dry: Good Lord, forgive me.
Congregation	When we have betrayed our calling Good Lord, forgive us.
Minister	When I have betrayed my calling, Good Lord, forgive me.

All **When there are issues unresolved,
or injuries unhealed,
or if hurt lies between us,
Good Lord, forgive us, now.**

President Give us true repentance;
forgive us our sins of negligence and ignorance
and our deliberate sins;
and grant us the grace of your Holy Spirit
to amend our lives according to your holy word.

All **Holy God,
holy and strong,
holy and immortal,
have mercy upon us.**

Praise

A hymn or song(s) of praise may follow, or Te Deum Laudamus, Gloria in Excelsis or the following Litany of the Resurrection

O give thanks to the Lord, for he is gracious:
and his mercy endures for ever.

He has loved us from all eternity:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And remembered us when we were in trouble:
for his mercy endures for ever.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He became incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man:
for his mercy endures for ever.

By his cross and passion he has redeemed the world:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And has washed us from our sins in his own blood:
for his mercy endures for ever.

On the third day he rose again:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And has given us the victory:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He ascended into heaven:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And opened wide for us the everlasting doors:
for his mercy endures for ever.

He is seated at the right hand of the Father:
for his mercy endures for ever.

And ever lives to make intercession for us:
for his mercy endures for ever.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
 and to the Holy Spirit;
 as it was in the beginning is now
 and shall be for ever.
 Amen.**

If appropriate the second part of the Litany of the Resurrection may follow here:

For the gift of his Spirit:
blessed be Christ.

For the catholic Church:
blessed be Christ.

For the means of grace:
blessed be Christ.

For the hope of glory:
blessed be Christ.

For the triumphs of his gospel:
blessed be Christ.

For the lives of his saints:
blessed be Christ.

In joy and in sorrow:
blessed be Christ.

In life and in death:
blessed be Christ.

Now and to the end of the ages:
blessed be Christ.

The Peace

The president introduces the Peace with one of the following:

May the God of peace sanctify you:
 may he so strengthen your hearts in holiness
 that you may be blameless before him
 at the coming of our Lord Jesus with his saints.

(or)

Jesus says to his disciples,
 'Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you.
 Let not your hearts be troubled or afraid.'
 The peace of the Lord be always with you.

The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

The Lord's Prayer

Awaiting the fulfilment of all God's promises,
 as our Saviour taught us, so we pray:

Our Father in heaven.....

or

Awaiting the fulfilment of all God's promises,
 let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us

Our Father who art in heaven.....

Prayer of Blessing

The departing minister prays for God's blessing on the people he or she is to leave, in this or another form:

The Lord bless you and keep you
the Lord make his face to shine on you and be gracious to you
the Lord lift up the light of his countenance upon you
and give you his peace
now and for ever.

Amen.

A hymn may follow.

¶ Sending Out

If the person or people retiring have keys, symbols of office or licences, these should be given now to those who gave them or their representatives.

If those retiring are priests or Readers, they may take their stoles or a scarf from the holy table as a sign of their continuing ministry.

They then move towards the door of the church.

The President says:

God of our beginnings and endings
we ask your blessing as *N (and M. continues on his / her journey.*
May the love and friendship we have shared
be a bond that unites us in days and years to come.

May the power of your presence
bless this moment of our leave taking.
This we ask, for the sake for Jesus Christ our Redeemer.

Amen.

Verses from Psalm 121 may follow if they have not been used earlier

The Lord himself watches over you; ♦
the Lord is your shade at your right hand,
So that the sun shall not strike you by day, ♦
neither the moon by night.

The Lord shall keep you from all evil; ♦
it is he who shall keep your soul.

The Lord shall keep watch over your going out
and your coming in, ♦
from this time forth for evermore.

The president says to the retiring minister(s)

As you journey onward,
trusting in God's power and promise,
we assure you of our love and prayers.

- Minister *As I leave, seeking to follow God's call
I assure you of my love and prayers.*
- President *As you enter your new life
we pray that you may see in all you meet
the face of Christ.*
- Minister *As you continue to grow in the life of Christ
I pray that you may always see the face of Christ in one another.*
- President *Go in peace for God goes with you.*
- Minister *Thanks be to God.*

The president says to all

Go in the light and peace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.

The resources above are offered by the Liturgical Commission of the Church of England for use with either A Service of the Word or the Order for the Celebration of Holy Communion. The material is for the minister to use in exercise of his or her discretion under Canon B5 of the Canons of the Church of England.

Some material in this service is taken from *Common Worship: Services and Prayers for the Church of England*, copyright © 2000-2008 The Archbishops' Council.

APPENDIX G

ETHICS FOR RETIRING AND RETIRED PASTORS

THE NATURE OF MINISTRY...

... in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is such that very strong and personal bonds are established between the pastor and members of the congregation. This can make retirement a very difficult and traumatic experience. Bringing the pastoral relationships to a complete closure is a crucially important matter for the retiring pastor, the members of the congregation and the retiring pastor's successor. The congregation and the new pastor need and deserve the opportunity to cultivate and establish those same bonds and relationships in ministry that previously existed between the retiring pastor and the congregation.

IT HAS BEEN WELL PROVEN ...

... that the retiring pastor is the key person to set the tone for the severing of the pastoral relationships. The pastor who handles retirement gracefully can become the "beloved former pastor," while the one who pursues the course of continuing involvement can end up destroying the very respect and strength that hard work and dedication had established.

In statements and actions public and private, both before and after retirement, the retiring pastor and spouse can very well establish the reality of a ministry that has been closed and completed and can clear the way for the successor.

At the same time, the congregation also bears responsibility for seeing that the transition from "active" to "retired" is accomplished smoothly and ethically. Members must avoid "holding on to" or "calling back" the retired pastor.

IT HAS ALSO BEEN CLEARLY SHOWN ...

... that moving away from the community in which the pastor has served makes the matter of ethics and proper relationships much easier to accomplish.

For the pastor who chooses to continue living in the community where he/she retired, making a complete break for an extended period of time has been shown to be extremely helpful, i.e., a lengthy interim ministry in another state or an extended vacation period or simply a planned sabbatical away from the church previously served.

SOME GUIDELINES OF ETHICAL BEHAVIOR

- 1 - Make a complete break from the church from which you are retiring, at least initially or as described above.
- 2 - Be a true and loyal friend to your former congregation and to its new pastor - by refusing to engage in pastoral or hospital calls and counseling.
- 3 - Attend weddings and funerals of former parishioners as a friend - but do not agree to conduct such services.
- 4 - Be an active member of the congregation of your choice. If you remain in the congregation formerly served, decline all major offices or positions.

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bianchi, Eugene C. *Aging as a Spiritual Journey*. NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1985

Persons in elder hood are summoned to fuller participation in the great concerns of humanity, i.e.; peace, justice, and ecological sanity. The author attempts to refine and develop a linkage of the societal environment to a spirituality of aging. In this he presents a blend of cultural, psychological, social-science, and theological elements.

Blasi, Anthony J. *Organized Religion and Seniors Mental Health*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1999

The author describes in non-technical language the roles that churches can play in the lives of older people. Here are not only programs for the elderly, but it goes behind the scene to indicate how a church can provide a program of good mental health.

Botwinick, Jack. *Aging and Behavior; A Comprehensive Integration of Research Findings*. NY: Springer Publishing Co. 1973.

This provides an up-to-date (1974) study of the literature which provides the bases for the psychology of aging. The information is detailed and comprehensive. I found this book to be especially helpful in providing grounding in the subject of aging in general.

Cahill, Lisa Sowle and Dietmar Mieth, ed. *Aging*. London: SCM Press. 1991.

The material here provides the highlights of the strong influence of European and North American cultures on Roman Catholic theology and ethics as it pertains to an aging population.

The later portion of the book provides a variety of explicitly theoretical interpretations of the meaning of the aging process, and of old age itself.

Campbell, R. Alastair. *The Elders: Seniority within Earliest Christianity*. Edinburgh: T&T Clark. Ltd. 1994.

Presented here is a study which leads to understanding with greater clarity what the ancient writers of the New Testament epistles meant when they spoke to us of the elders. There appears to be an inconsistency in the use of the word "elder". Sometimes it has reference to an office in the church, at other times it refers to an older person in the family or community.

CARA. Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate. Special Report, Spring. 2009. "*When We Can No Longer Do.*" Issues in retirement of Diocese Priests.

Here is a resource which provides the latest data information, and surveys of issues confronting the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. The material is presented in a very simple, but accurate form. This was also informative as to how differently diocese see the needs of retiring prelists.

Clayton, Paul C. *Called For Life: Finding Meaning in Retirement*. Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute. 2008.

I found this resource to be most helpful in that the author addresses the dynamics of clergy retirement out of his own experience as a retired minister of the United Church of Christ.

Dulin, Rachel Z. *A Crown of Glory: A Biblical View of Aging*. New York: Paulist Press. 1988.

This monograph provides an investigation of the physiological, cultural, sociological, theological, and spiritual observations of aging made by the collective voices of the Hebrew Bible. Because it was written over several millennia, there is no unified view of aging, or other issues of life.

Fischer, Kathleen R. *Winter Grace: Spirituality and Aging*. Nashville, TN: Upper Room Books. 1998.

This is an exploration of the Christian perception on several key issues of the aging; memories, dependence and interdependence, love and sexuality, loss, dying, and resurrection. This was most helpful in that it takes you inside the mind of the aging person.

Harris, J. Gordon. *Biblical Perspectives on Aging: God and the Elderly*. Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press. 1987.

This essay traces the variety of attitudes and practices reflected in Old and New Testament cultures. Harris traces the theme of aging in the scriptures with depth and clarity.

Heschel, Abraham J. "The Older Person and the Family in the Perspective of Jewish Tradition," In Carol LeFevre and Perry LeFevre (ed). *Aging and the Human Spirit: A Reader in Religion and Gerontology*. Chicago, IL: Exploration Press. 1981

Aging characterized not by social norms, but by God's creation.

Jewell, Albert. (ed), *Spirituality and Aging*. Philadelphia, PA: Kingsley Publications, 1999.

A collection of 17 essays written to raise the awareness of the spiritual needs of older people, and to encourage interest in the spirituality of aging.

John Paul II. A Pastoral Letter to the Bishops, clergy, and faithful on the Formation of Priests in the circumstances of the present day. (March 25, 1992).

[Http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jpii_m](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/messages/vocations/documents/hf_jpii_m).

A brief but clear word of encouragement to presbyters that the Holy Spirit is the instrumentality which allows the grace of God in Jesus Christ to flow through our lives and ministries.

_____. Message for XXXIX World Day for Vocations. 2002.

[Http://www.vatican.va/holy_paul_ii/messages/vocations/document/hf_jp_ii_m](http://www.vatican.va/holy_paul_ii/messages/vocations/document/hf_jp_ii_m).

In this document Pope John Paul II summarizes in a clear and concise statement, the high call of Christ to His ministry. The ideas herein provided for me, grounding for the theological base of this project.

Kimble, Melvin. . . (et al), editors. *Aging, Spirituality and Religion: a Handbook*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press. 1995.

This extensive handbook on Gerontology was the first major attempt to synthesize the vast literature and data that provided the foundation for Gerontology to grow and flourish. Over fifty specialists and researchers contributed to this volume. The brief essays and reports were very helpful in launching the base for my project.

Koinig, Harold George. *Aging and God: special pathways to mental health in midlife and later years*. New York: Hawthorn Pastoral Press. 1994.

Dr. Koinig is a research Psychiatrist at Duke University. In this volume he traces the history and outcomes of the dance that has taken place between religious faith and psychiatry. The latter section of the book is focused on the reality and mind set of older citizens.

Koinig, Harold G. with Tracy Lamar and Betty Lamar. *A Gospel for the Mature Years: Finding Fulfillment by Knowing and Using your Gifts*. New York: Hawthorn Press. 1997.

These authors provide a thesis that, chronological age doesn't have much to do with the time when life really comes together (gestalt) and individuals feel real good about themselves and their contributions to life.

Addington, Richard. *Last Poems* by D. H. Lawrence. London: Martin Secker. 1933

A fitting and appropriate poem about aging, with sharp tones of spirituality.

Moody, Harry R. *Conscious Aging: A New Level of Growth in Later Life*. New York: Human Services Press. 2002.

This monograph unfolds the discussion and policy review that transpires with the dramatic increase of older citizens. This increase in numbers and in longevity causes stress in sorting out ethical responses from the larger society. He addresses the question, head-on, regarding age-based rationing of resources and economic dislocations caused by this increase of aging persons.

No-win, Henri and Walter J. Gaffney. *Aging and Ministry*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co. 1974.

Nouwen and Gaffney provide an uplifting, but realistic narrative regarding aging and spirituality. The narrative is interspersed with the art of photo journalism. The last sentence of the narrative affects the tone of the whole book. "Every human being has his own life cycle to live, but together our aging can become the fulfillment of the promise of Him who by his aging and death brought new life to the world."

Rodreguez, Jose Vincente. *God Speaks in the Night: The Life, Times, and Teaching of St. John of the Cross*. Washington D.C.: ICS Publications. 1991

The writings of St. John of the Cross provided a contemplative dimension to my engagement and theological component of addressing the needs of retired ministers.

Sheehy, Gail. *New Passages: Mapping Your Life across Time*. New York: Random House. 1995.

Sheehy provides a developmental life-staging theory that accommodates the present day cultural view of how life unfolds in America. Her essay, "The Present Never Ages." Provides a poignant attitude for people of retirement age.

Thomas, L. Eugene and Susan A. Eisenhandler (eds). *Aging and the Religious Dimension..* Westport, CON: Auburn House. 1994.

This volume was helpful in dealing with the older theory of aging referred to as "disengagement". Presented here is what the authors refer to as "Gero-transcendence." It is regarded as the final stage of a natural process toward maturation and wisdom. It gives the individual the experience of feeling cosmic communion with the spirit of the universe. I would interpret this viewpoint as an emergence of the contemplative, as one deals with the experience of time, space, life, death, and a redefinition of self.